

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

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

## **Preface:**

Advancing human rights and democracy around the world not only reflects our nation's deepest values, it is profoundly within our interests. For a world where fundamental freedoms are respected and citizens can elect accountable, representative governments is a world of hope and opportunity, where conflict and chaos do not rage and tyranny and terrorism cannot thrive.

The United States' work for human rights and democracy enjoys strong bipartisan backing here at home, and we do much of it in partnership with our allies and friends overseas. Americans can take pride in the international human rights instruments we have helped to shape and uphold. We stand in solidarity with the extraordinary men and women around the world who 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.

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. Georgia's Mikheil Saakashvili is only one of many young leaders who have participated in U.S.-sponsored exchange programs and returned home determined to advance reform. In 2003, Saakashvili led the peaceful Revolution of Roses, which ultimately resulted in new, democratic elections. Now President Saakashvili and his people face the great challenge of putting the democratic ideals that they have embraced into daily practice, and we are doing our utmost to help them succeed.

This congressionally mandated annual report, Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record, shows how the United States worked worldwide in 2003 and 2004 to expose and remedy human rights violations and to foster the evolution of vibrant, stable democracies. As President Bush has 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. ♦

Colin L. Powell, Secretary of State

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The events in Georgia in November 2003 brought with them many significant lessons, certainly to the people of Georgia who for years have sought more political transparency and economic reforms, and also to many others throughout the world, in all segments of society and political life, who dream of freedom and democracy. Perhaps they held a lesson for those remaining in the world who rule through oppression and fear as well. But for the U.S. Government, the lesson is straightforward and profound: Effective U.S. diplomacy means reaching out beyond government circles and developing and nurturing a broad range of long-term allies.

In February 2004, Secretary of State Powell communicated the following message to U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world, to remind them of the value of this important lesson:

UNCLASSIFIED TELEGRAM

February 13, 2004

To: ALL STATE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

Origin: DRL

From: SECSTATE WASHDC (STATE 32940 - IMMEDIATE)

TAGS: KDEM, PGOV, PHUM, GG

Captions: None

Subject: REACHING OUT TO ALLIES BEYOND HOST GOVERNMENTS

Ref: None

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Last month, I attended the inauguration of Mikheil Saakashvili as President of Georgia. This dynamic, young politician came to power by leading the people of Georgia to reject corruption and rigged elections and to demand democracy. The resignation of President Shevardnadze and the peaceful transfer of power were genuinely historic, and I was struck by the gratitude expressed by the new government and civil society leaders for the many years of strong U.S. support for Georgia and its people.

The reason for such strong pro-American feelings is simple - good diplomacy, including public diplomacy. Over the past decade, Embassy Tbilisi, while maintaining strong relations with the Shevardnadze government, also consistently stood on the side of democracy and reached out to individuals and groups outside the government. President Saakashvili was an IV participant and studied law in the United States. American NGOs funded by the U.S. Government have worked with opposition political parties and civil society in Georgia to help them build the capacity to constitute an effective, unified democratic force in the country. We also pressed the government for years to accept and work with these groups and to carry out other political and economic reforms.

Maintaining government-to-government relations must remain a priority. When in addition you are reaching out beyond the government, and also beyond current elites of power and influence, you are forging relationships that will serve us well into the future, and help those struggling for democracy to develop the party structures, independent media and other institutions necessary to achieve it. As the lesson of Georgia shows us, it is never clear where -- or when -- the next generation's leaders will emerge. Host governments may not always appreciate such outreach, but they must learn that you are simply doing your jobs as professionals.

What I saw last month was that through good diplomacy and good assistance programs, the United States had not just made friends with a new government, but we have a friendship with the Georgian people that will last for generations. This is a model worth replicating.

Keep up the good work.

MINIMIZE CONSIDERED  
POWELL

### **U.S. Human Rights and Democracy Strategy:**

The National Security Strategy of the United States lists eight demands of human dignity: the rule of law, limits on the absolute power of the state, freedom of speech and freedom of worship, equal justice, respect for women, religious and ethnic tolerance and respect for private property.

The United States is pursuing a broad strategy of promoting respect for human rights that is both appropriate in itself and beneficial for U.S. security. The United States is persuaded that regimes that violate the human rights of their own citizens are more likely to disrupt peace and security in their region and to create a reservoir of ill will that can accrue to the detriment of the United States. The best guarantor of security and prosperity at home and abroad is respect for individual liberty and protection of human

rights through good governance and the rule of law. The United States pursues this policy through bilateral and multilateral avenues.

For decades, the United States has placed significant emphasis on respect for human rights in our bilateral relationships. The ♦Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,♦ the ♦Report on International Religious Freedom♦ and the ♦Trafficking in Persons Report♦ detail the state of human rights in countries around the world, and serve as the guide for diplomatic and programmatic efforts to end them. President Bush, Secretary of State Powell and other senior officials regularly communicate America♦s views and values regarding human rights in meetings and other direct communications with foreign leaders. Senior officials also engage in constant diplomatic efforts to remedy abuses, including in some extreme cases by using sanctions and other authorities in the law. Our words are matched by action through programmatic efforts by the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. In the Bush administration, these efforts have been given new dimensions through the Millennium Challenge Account and the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative, and by tripling the State Department♦s Human Rights and Democracy Fund and the proposed doubling of funding for the National Endowment for Democracy.

In June 2000, a new multilateral effort was launched when the United States joined with other democratic countries in Warsaw, Poland to launch the Community of Democracies (CD). Since then, the United States has begun discussing the formation of a democracy caucus in the United Nations with interested members of the CD in Washington, New York and Geneva. The United States envisions this as a group of like-minded countries that would coordinate more closely in multilateral settings to advance goals consistent with democratic values. It will also help to garner broader support for UN resolutions that are consistent with democratic objectives. The United States has held a series of meetings and garnered strong support for the formation of such a caucus.

The UN Commission on Human Rights is the world♦s forum for the discussion of human rights, and the United States has been a member of the Commission for all but one year of its existence. The UN General Assembly also provides an excellent opportunity for the United States to promote democratic ideals, respect for human rights and good governance by supporting strong, accurate human rights resolutions.

### **Purpose and Acknowledgements:**

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the Fiscal Year 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which requires the Department to report on actions taken by the U.S. Government to encourage respect for human rights. This second annual

submission complements the longstanding Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003, and takes the next step, moving from highlighting abuses to publicizing the actions and programs the United States has taken to end those abuses.

Unlike the 196 Country Reports, *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004* highlights U.S. efforts to promote human rights and democracy in only 101 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. Also unlike the Country Reports for 2003, this report includes Iraq. To make this report consistent with the criteria in the legislation, this report also includes a number of additions: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Honduras, Iraq, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Thailand, and Turkey, as well as a number of deletions: Bahrain, Ghana, Oman and Qatar.

*Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004* 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. Our embassies and consulates prepared the initial drafts of the reports. After the missions completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, in cooperation with other State Department offices and other Departments and agencies. As they worked to analyze and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own knowledge of U.S. government programs and activities.

*Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004* 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 staff of the report consists of: Editor in Chief ♦ Robert P. Jackson; Senior Advisors ♦ Ambassador Michael G. Kozak and Elizabeth Dugan; Editors ♦ Lena Auerbach, Jared Banks, Jarrett Basedow, Connie Braxton, Kent Brokenshire, Sally I. Buikema, Deborah J. Cahalen, Daniel Cain, Stuart Crampton, Kara Cumberland, Jeannette Davis, Patricia A. Davis, Adrienne Faraci, Carol G. Finerty, Sajit J. Gandhi, Jean M. Geran, Saba Ghori, Karen Gilbride, Sondra Govatski, Patrick Harvey, Sandra Hodgkinson, Donna Ifill, Ann Marie Jackson, Yvonne Jackson, Jeffrey M. Jamison, Christina Jun, Lisa Kaplan, Catherine Kuchta-Helbling, Joanna Levison, Leonel G. Miranda, Peter Mulrean, Michael Orona, Susan O ♦ Sullivan, Sarah Fox Ozkan, LeRoy G. Potts, Lisa Rende-Taylor, Wendy B. Silverman, Rana Siu, Vonzella Taylor, and Danika Walters; USAID Photo Librarian - Patricia Adams; Graphic Designer ♦ Regina Cross; and Web Editor - Joan Francischelli.

## **Africa:**

“We affirmed our mutual desire to further deepen our cooperation for the benefit of the United States and Kenya. The U.S. supported the efforts made by Kenya in consolidating democracy, particularly after the successful general elections of December 2002. We share the common desire to promote and entrench democracy in Africa, and the need to support Kenya as a model of democracy.”

-Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, October 7, 2003

A decade ago single-party states and military dictatorships were the norm in sub-Saharan Africa. The 2004 Freedom in the World report, using its stringent criteria, lists 11 African countries as free and 20 as partly free. Many more countries have made significant strides toward free and fair elections, effective governance and respect for internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Mauritania, for example, passed a law providing severe criminal sanctions for those convicted of trafficking in persons and using forced labor. Some long-term civil wars, including those in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sudan, have concluded or may be near resolution.

Nonetheless, democracy efforts and human rights in Africa face severe challenges. These result from continuing conflict in some countries and regions, weak institutions and leadership, disunity among racial, linguistic, religious and tribal groups, corruption and poor governance. Two years after deeply flawed presidential elections, the brave people of Zimbabwe continue to struggle under the heel of a despotic regime. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the end of apartheid in South Africa and the Rwandan genocide. The anniversary of both events continues to raise awareness on the need to promote and respect universal human rights.

Some African leaders recognize the challenge; one promising initiative is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). To be effective, both NEPAD and the African Union must demonstrate their credibility by holding each participating state to high standards of democracy and human rights and imposing consequences for those African nations that fail to uphold them. Sub-regional bodies like the Southern African Development Community and Economic Community of West African States also have important roles to play.

The United States is buttressing African efforts through election support and corporate responsibility programs. We have focused on efforts to resolve conflicts, defuse religious tensions and strengthen rule of law, free media and civil society. Building upon the Community of Democracies, democratic nations from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Miami in June 2003 for a Dialogue on Democracy, to exchange experiences and develop inter- and intra-regional dialogues, institutions and

strategies to strengthen the global framework of democracy. We continue to seek ways to expand capacity building and to professionalize African militaries. The African Growth and Opportunity Act encourages reform efforts. The Millennium Challenge Account, President Bush's landmark initiative to produce new accountability and results in foreign aid, also stands to benefit Africa.

### **ALVA WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT PROJECT**

The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor allocated \$400,000 from its Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support the ALVA Consortium's Women's Leadership Program in East Africa. This innovative regional project is currently under way in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda and due to its success the project is expanding to include Angola.

The project equips candidates with the skills necessary to run an effective campaign, including developing platforms, grassroots outreach, research techniques, incorporating the media into their campaigns and giving presentations. Women traditionally have been underrepresented in the political process and therefore often lack the skills needed to seek their place in a representative government. Empowering women in these countries will lead to a better informed citizenry and increased participation in political and economic decision-making. Upon completion of the program, a core group of women in each country will have the experience and skills necessary to establish sustainable leadership programs.

The project has enjoyed remarkable success in each country. For example, in Rwanda the project led to the development of the Rwanda Women's Leadership Caucus Conference (RWLC), which has been an important step in the development of representative democracy in Rwanda. Of the 20 Rwandan women taking part in the project, 15 from the initial RWLC won political office in the September-October 2003 parliamentary elections. President Paul Kagame has appointed three of the women to serve as members of the Senate, the upper body of the emerging bicameral parliamentary system.

In December 2002, just 30 days before national elections, the ALVA Consortium led a similar program in Kenya. Working closely with Egerton University in Njoro, Kenya, ALVA crafted a program to strengthen political campaign management skills among 24 Kenyan women candidates. Six of the 24 won their initial primary elections, and three went on to win in the general elections. One of the participants has since been appointed by Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki to serve as the Assistant Minister of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services.

### **ANGOLA**

Angola is a constitutional republic in transition after the end of its 27-year civil war in 2002. Consultations among the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, opposition parties and civil society on a new constitution, electoral law and a timetable for national elections were under way at the end of 2003.

The Government's overall human rights record remained poor; there was continuing improvement in a few areas, but serious problems remained. The right of citizens to change their government remained restricted due to the delay in scheduling elections. Members of the security forces committed abuses, including unlawful killings and excessive use of force. Prison conditions were harsh and lengthy pretrial detentions common. The judiciary did not consistently ensure due process and poor records and procedures contributed to prolonged detentions. The Government at times restricted freedom of the press and mistreated journalists. Poor governance, including endemic corruption, continued to limit the provision of basic services to most citizens. However, the Government began infrastructure rehabilitation efforts during the year and the number of persons displaced by the conflict decreased significantly. Violence and discrimination against women were common throughout Angolan society. Children and persons with disabilities suffered as a result of poor economic conditions and limited protections against discrimination. Child labor was a problem, and there were reports of trafficking in persons.

As Angola develops its post-conflict political system, the U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights is focused on empowering Angolans to interact more effectively with their government and advocate on their own behalf across a wide range of issues. The Embassy's efforts include training political parties and civil society to effectively participate in elections, advancing the dissemination of independent information, improving judicial capacity and respect for due process, and fostering Angolan civil society's lobbying and input on human and civil rights issues. The Ambassador chairs a multi-agency Democracy Committee that develops and implements democracy and human rights promotion activities in consultation with Angolan and international non-governmental organization (NGO) partners.

Given the importance of free and fair elections in the development of accountability and the protection of human rights, the Embassy has allocated a significant portion of its Economic Support Funds (ESF) to support the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the International Foundation for Election Systems in creating viable political and electoral structures. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003, NDI and IRI launched activities to prepare civil society organizations and political parties, respectively, for national elections and opened an electoral resource center in Luanda. NDI supported the creation of a first-ever network designed to develop and promote effective civil society involvement and participation in national elections. IRI provided organizational training to 12 of the major political parties during the year, including technical assistance for planning the Union for the Total Independence of Angola's first post-conflict congress, furthering its transition from armed movement to political party. Both NDI and IRI conducted extensive opinion polls to raise awareness of elections and highlight citizens' concerns.

The Embassy is also providing assistance to independent media outlets as an alternative to the state-controlled media. Activities include the purchase of newsprint for the independent weekly newspapers and



the installation of radio transmitters to permit independent broadcaster Radio Ecclesia to expand its news coverage nationwide. In 2003, the Embassy assisted the Association of Independent Angolan Newspapers with a new printing press for equal use by the independent weekly newspapers. The Embassy also supports Voice of America's Linha Directa service, including journalism training. With ESF and public diplomacy funds, the Embassy supported short- and long-term professional skills enhancement for local journalists through courses, seminars and exchanges. Public diplomacy efforts also engage media via the International Visitor program, U.S. speakers and information dissemination.

The Embassy has taken advantage of the opening political climate to build the capacity of Angolan NGOs and support their efforts to promote democratic change and push the Government to address human rights abuses. In 2003, the Ambassador's Democracy Small Grants program, combining ESF, Democracy and Human Rights Fund small grants and the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund, supported more than a dozen Angolan NGOs in promoting civil and human rights, including awareness of prisoner's rights, legal advocacy and the establishment of a civil rights information center. In an effort to help Angolans interact more effectively with their government, the Embassy aided local groups in holding forums, town meetings and seminars aimed at increasing citizens' participation and contributions to key Angolan revision processes such as the drafting of the new constitution which is expected to be approved in 2004. Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening partners are also including information on the electoral components of the constitution in their training programs. In addition to mobilizing an unprecedented level of Angolan civil society input in the legislation, the coalition successfully lobbied for extended public comment period and modifications to the second draft law. The Embassy also helped publish a land tenure manual in local languages to facilitate wider public discussion in rural areas.

Consistent with a larger focus on fostering the economic and social recovery of four central "Planalto" provinces that constitute Angola's agricultural breadbasket, the Embassy is working with the same target populations to strengthen their ability to effectively engage their government and promote greater political competition, accountability and transparency. Current activities include grassroots education campaigns on issues such as land rights, access to justice and education, support for communities working in partnership with local governments on small infrastructure projects such as school rehabilitation, and media support such as the provision of supplies and equipment to 15 provincial chapters of the national journalists association to strengthen local-level journalist capacity.

The Embassy continued providing technical assistance, training and grants to specific civil society coalitions engaged in issues as wide-ranging as advocacy for children's rights to education, rights to housing for internally displaced women, and rights to confidentiality and employment for people living with HIV/AIDS. The civil society coalitions organized 218 advocacy campaigns, seminars and workshops that reached 21,929 people in FY 2003.

The coalition on rights to housing for internally displaced women was successful in pressuring the Government to approve a decree on the Resettlement and Reintegration of the Internally Displaced, providing a legal framework for government assistance to internally displaced persons, particularly important for improving the lives of families headed by women.

In the key area of access to justice, the Commerce Law Development Program's legal assistance project with the Ministry of Justice trained 12 Angolan court clerks in Sarasota, Florida and an additional 24 in Luanda on improved case tracking procedures. During the year provincial criminal courts implemented several of the new procedures that have assisted in clearing the substantial backlog of cases pending.

### **BURKINA FASO**

The Government of Burkina Faso's human rights record remained poor, although there were some improvements in a few areas in 2003 and early 2004. Political rights, particularly the right to change 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. human rights and democracy strategy combines advocacy and program support to draw attention to international human rights norms, emphasize accountability and transparency in government, and nurture the large and active but under-financed non-governmental organization community that is engaged in the human rights/democracy arena. Several of the Embassy's regular interlocutors have emphasized that they see the American Embassy as the best and strongest advocate in the country for human rights and democracy.

Encouraged by diplomatic missions in Burkina Faso, including that of the United States, criticism and publicity campaigns by human rights associations resulted in a sharp decline in extrajudicial killings of criminal suspects by Burkina Faso police in 2002. The treatment of detainees accused in the alleged coup plot uncovered in October 2003 is also a priority for the United States. The Ambassador has repeatedly stressed to the Government the importance of transparency and full adherence to international human rights norms in its treatment of the detainees, and the Embassy continues to press for a fair and speedy trial and presentation of evidence in 2004.

Over the past several years, through Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) and Public Diplomacy (PD) grants, the United States helped equip a number of local tribunals in the interior of the country with photocopiers and typewriters. In 2002, the United States used DHRF funds to sponsor a workshop on the living conditions in Burkina Faso prisons. Following that workshop, the Justice Minister committed himself to addressing prisoners' harsh living conditions through a number of initiatives. The United States continues to follow up on this issue with local human rights organizations including by visiting local prisons. A Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 DHRF program supported innovative training in Ouagadougou and

Koudougou schools on children's rights that is now being considered by the Ministry of Education as a model for other school districts.

As part of the International Visitor program, in 2003 and 2004, the United States sent a number of professionals in the areas of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution, AIDS and civic education and journalism to the United States.

Human rights and democracy building remain strategic goals in U.S. policy toward Burkina Faso. The United States continues to encourage the Government to improve its human rights record and accelerate democratic reforms, particularly with regard to coming elections. DHRF money also supports activities that promote human rights and democratic development. In addition to sponsoring these events with program funding, the Ambassador and other embassy staff have worked to promote women's rights, children's rights and the rights of people infected with HIV/AIDS.

U.S.-funded programs focusing on training journalists in investigative and political reporting, bringing together political parties for consideration of necessary electoral reforms, and personal advocacy from the Ambassador to encourage opposition parties to participate fully in the political reform process, paid off during the 2002 legislative elections. Both international and national observers stated that the elections were free and fair, with no serious fraud or harassment reported. In addition, all opposition parties participated and quadrupled their representation, taking 49 percent of the seats. For the first time since multiparty politics were restored in 1992, Burkina Faso has a genuinely pluralist legislature.

The country is now gearing up for 2005 elections to elect the president and also local commune representatives (a newly created office under Burkina Faso's decentralization plan). Political jockeying for these elections has already begun at the national level. A Human Rights and Democracy Fund grant supported the production of a play on the rights and obligations of citizens in a democracy, in particular during elections; the play will be performed in rural areas in different local languages.

PD grants 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.

Furthering the U.S. policy of promoting religious freedom, the Embassy 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 International Visitor program 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 sent both military and civilian attendees to programs sponsored by the African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), permitting them to gain insight into the workings of the military in a democratic society.

Using U.S. Labor Department funds, the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor and the Burkina anti-trafficking in children project funded a workshop on draft anti-child trafficking legislation in late 2002. The National Assembly passed the law in May 2003 and is now working on educating the public about its provisions. Two new grants from the Office to Monitor and Combat the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) are also funding an information booklet on the new law as well as a locally produced documentary on the dangers of child trafficking. FY 2003 TIP and INL funding was used for a highly successful training program on trafficking for local police in all 13 regions of Burkina Faso. In 2003, the U.S. Labor Department's International Child Labor Program funded a \$3 million project to combat child trafficking through education, to be implemented by Save the Children-Canada. Through DHRF funding, the Embassy has also sponsored programs on female genital mutilation, forced marriage, women's and children's rights, the rights of persons with HIV/AIDS and the problem of social exclusion.

## **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 specifies that by the end of the post-transitional period on October 31, 2004, communal and National Assembly elections are to be held and the National Assembly is to choose the first president of the post-transitional period. Under a protocol on power sharing signed by the Government and the largest rebel group, the CNDD-FDD, a new cabinet was inaugurated on November 23, 2003. An integrated army General Staff was established on January 6, 2004. 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 \$250 million in humanitarian assistance to Burundi.

The Transitional Government's human rights record remained poor, and it 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 freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, association and movement. Violence and discrimination against women continued. Commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of child soldiers were problems. Discrimination against persons with disabilities, indigenous Twa populations and state discrimination against Hutus remained serious problems. Societal discrimination between the Hutus and Tutsis continued. Incidents of ethnically motivated property destruction and killing occurred throughout the country. Child labor and trafficking in persons was a problem. 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 U.S. human rights and democracy goals in Burundi include helping the people 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. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor E. Michael Southwick visited Bujumbura in August to highlight human rights and democracy concerns. During the Secretary of State's September 30 meeting with President Ndayizeye, the Secretary again encouraged the Government to respect basic rights. This private diplomacy proceeded in tandem with public statements issued by the Embassy and State Department. In 2003, President Ndayizeye met with U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations John D. Negroponte during the UN General Assembly.

U.S. programs in Fiscal Year 2003 to promote the defense of individual rights include assistance to League Iteka, a Burundian human rights organization, which maintains a country-wide network of human rights monitors and observers, and reports on overall conditions as well as violations. A \$300,000 grant to the International Human Rights Law Group is aimed at building the reporting capacity of local human rights organizations.

In addition, the United States provided a \$2,450,000 grant to Search for Common Ground and the International Human Rights Law Group to fund democracy and human rights projects and civil society organizations. To strengthen civil society and support women's rights, Search for Common Ground funds

the Women's Peace Center. This group consists of women's associations that build capacity and promote messages concerning women's rights and peace.

Search for Common Ground also has an agreement with the Implementation Monitoring Committee, the UN-chaired body charged with supervising the implementation of the Arusha Agreement, to organize discussions with the population aimed at building support for the Agreement.

With a \$300,000 grant, the International Human Rights Law Group lobbies parliamentarians to support legislation that gives the force of law to provisions of the Arusha Agreement. Examples include a bill establishing a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a post-transition constitution.

The United States also finances 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. Citizens' ability to change their government remained limited. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was subject to significant executive influence and suffered from corruption and inefficiency. The Government continued to impose limits on freedoms of speech and the press. Cameroon's human rights record remained poor. Although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Security forces continued to commit numerous abuses, such as unlawful killings and torture, and to use arbitrary arrest and detention. Violence and discrimination against women remained serious problems. Societal discrimination based on religion and against ethnic minorities continued. Child labor and trafficking in persons also remained problems in 2003.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Cameroon is to improve the democratic and human rights environment throughout the country by promoting elections that meet international standards, decentralization, independent and professional media, strong civil society and religious tolerance, as well as combating child labor. The United States has also been involved in a number of high profile public outreach efforts to help develop a free press and advance democratic reform. Over the course of 2003 and early 2004, the United States has actively engaged officials from all levels of the Cameroonian Government, local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), members of civil society and the media to strengthen Cameroon's democratic institutions and improve respect for human rights. With presidential elections scheduled for October 2004, the United States' primary focus is on developing a more free, fair and transparent electoral process and preparing the media to effectively cover the elections.

In anticipation of the October 2004 presidential elections, the Ambassador and other embassy personnel have met repeatedly with high-level Cameroonian officials, including President Biya, to encourage concrete action in reaching the Cameroonian government's stated objective of holding a free and fair election. The Embassy formed a donors' working group to coordinate policy messages and assistance expenditures in support of that goal. The Ambassador attended an international meeting 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). Legislation passed by the National Assembly in 2003 makes the NEO a semi-permanent body by extending members' terms to three years and explicitly includes NGOs and opposition parties in the member selection process.

In order to promote democracy and decentralization, the United States has worked to develop the capacity of local government leaders by organizing a seminar for 25 mayors and other elected officials on public involvement in democracy. Additionally, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the Embassy held several interactive dialogues on democracy and human rights with Washington and other African posts through the State Department's broadcasting network for Africa (AFNET).

The United States has been active in developing an independent and professional media in Cameroon. The PAS held numerous training workshops for journalists, including five "Corner Stones" workshops to instruct more than 150 local journalists on how to effectively cover electoral politics. The PAS also organized two workshops on investigative journalism attended by more than 130 journalists. These workshops were widely covered by the local media, increasing their impact. The United States also sponsored a speaking tour by Dr. Christopher Fomunyoh, Regional Director for Africa at the National Democratic Institute, who spoke on "Community Involvement in the Electoral Process" and the "Role of the Media in Elections."

Despite the 2000 law authorizing the creation of private radio and television stations, the Government continued to fail to respond to requests for broadcast licenses, and radio and television stations were forced to operate illegally. In December 2003, the PAS Officer met with the Cameroonian Minister of Communications Jacques Fame Ndongo to discuss the problem and underscore the importance of developing a free press in Cameroon.

To complement the 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 using Economic Support Funds totaling \$250,000 to local NGOs for elections-related projects: \$180,000 to the Cameroon League for Human Rights to distribute nationwide an elections guide in seven local languages, 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; and \$70,000 to the Youths International Movement for Africa to distribute a series of educational posters in French, English and seven local languages related to election themes, 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 election education campaign.

The Democracy and Human Rights Fund awarded \$50,000 to three organizations working to sensitize Cameroonians on good governance, human rights and the importance of being politically active. The United States also sponsored 17 government and civil society leaders to travel to America through the International Visitor program.

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 Cameroon Government for training in Civil Military Relations, Military Peacekeeping Operations and Maritime Law Enforcement. The United States spent \$176,485 on training for Cameroonian military and law enforcement through the Expanded International Military Education and Training program.

The Embassy worked to advance women's rights and the rights of disabled persons throughout the year. The PAS organized a seminar on "Women's Social and Political Integration" and an AFNET program on "Women in Development" involving approximately 200 women leaders. Through the Special Self Help Grant program, local communities built a number of maternal health centers and also received materials for a school for the blind.

In the area of religious freedom and tolerance, the PAS organized a panel discussion on "Islam and Religious Tolerance," excerpts of which were aired during two editions of the weekly television program "Understanding Islam." The Ambassador also reached out to the Muslim community of Cameroon by hosting an Iftar dinner during the holy month of Ramadan. In addition, approximately 500 copies of the International Information Programs pamphlet "Muslim Life in America" were distributed to Muslim leaders throughout the country.

Funding continued to flow from U.S. Labor Department for the multi-year International Labor Organization (ILO) program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor from the cocoa sector of commercial agriculture. In an effort to combat trafficking of women and children, the United States gave the ILO in Cameroon two \$150,000 grants to develop new trafficking legislation and train local law enforcement and the judiciary on implementation of the new legislation.



## **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

The human rights record of the Central African Republic (CAR) 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 the coup, pro-government forces and rebels engaged in widespread looting, beating and raping of civilians. Although the newly installed government has made some positive progress, security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests. Prolonged detention without trial, infringements on privacy and harsh prison conditions remain problematic. Violence and discrimination against women, female genital mutilation, child prostitution, discrimination against indigenous people (Pygmies), trafficking in persons and child labor also continue to be problems.

Operations at Embassy Bangui are currently suspended due to the unstable security situation throughout the country, and relations are conducted from Washington. In accordance with U.S. law, the Government is 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 U.S. strategy for promoting human rights and democracy in the CAR supports 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. The United States monitors closely instances of violations, and, in December 2003, actively participated in the UN Security Council's consideration of the recently released Secretary General's report on the CAR. Along with the other members of the Security Council, the United States noted the positive efforts made toward achieving reconciliation and reconstruction, but noted with concern the continuing insecurity and human rights violations.

The United States also continues to investigate avenues for providing humanitarian aid and promoting democratic processes as permitted by U.S. law. In addition to joining the United Nation's call for an international response for the CAR, the United States is promoting freedom of the press by providing financial support to an independent radio station. This \$300,000 grant to Radio Ndeke Luka enhances local media capabilities by underwriting one full year of programming. Radio Ndeke Luka will help to ensure that human rights violations are reported in a timely and accurate manner and was instrumental in provoking an investigation by the Government into the brutal slaying of three young demonstrators.

## **CHAD**

Chad is a centralized republic dominated by a strong presidency. President Idriss Deby has ruled since taking power in a 1990 coup. He has been re-elected twice, although both elections were marred by irregularities. The majority of power is limited to allies of the President's political and ethnic bases.

The Government of Chad's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious human rights abuses. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of the security forces, and there were frequent instances in which elements of the security forces acting independent of Government authority committed serious human rights abuses. There were widespread reports of extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings and rape by government security forces. According to local human rights organizations, nearly one half of all human rights abuses committed in the country involved arbitrary or unlawful killings by security forces; members of the security forces who committed human rights abuses were rarely punished. Security forces continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention, and prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. The judiciary remained ineffective, under-funded, overburdened and subject to executive interference, and death sentences were carried out during the year under circumstances that raised questions concerning due process. The Government at times limited freedom of the press, assembly, religion and movement. Violence and societal discrimination against women were common. Both official and societal ethnic and regional discrimination remained widespread. There also were reports of forced labor, including forced child labor. Trafficking in persons was a problem.

The United States promotes human rights in Chad in several ways. U.S. officials routinely discussed human rights conditions at the highest levels of government and with local human rights activists. The United States has urged the Government to ensure that revenues from Chad's oil exports via the Chad-Cameroon pipeline are managed transparently and for the good of all Chadians. In 2003 and early 2004, the United States also explored work with a network of individuals from the judicial system. Additional efforts have been made in the areas of media capacity building and the training of Chadian military forces.

The United States addressed human rights abuses committed in 2003 by protesting the public executions of nine convicted murderers in November and arguing that due process had not been followed. The executions, however, proceeded as planned. The United States had a more positive response in opposing the arrest of two newspaper editors in February. The editors, who had been arrested for criticizing a relative of President Deby, were released from prison with a reduced fine following extensive international and local pressure. The United States also raised concerns over the closing of a public radio station in October, arguing that the closure did not follow standard procedures. The station was reopened in December.

The United States actively works with members of the media to promote high standards of journalism. In September, the Embassy arranged a one-week workshop in southern Chad, led by an American journalist. The workshop focused on reporting techniques and balanced reporting, attracting more than 20 local

journalists. The Embassy also sent a locally hired employee to a three-week training session in the United States to learn how to work more effectively with local media contacts. Despite reduced funding levels, the establishment of a private radio station in northern Chad is currently under way.

In an effort to address widespread problems within the justice system, the United States explored ways to promote needed improvements and participated in Chad's "States General of Justice" in June, which examined the general state of the judicial system and possible solutions. Steps were also taken to launch an informal network of judges and lawyers to both identify concerns about the system and explore ways the United States could support reform.

To further promote key human rights-related issues in Chad, the United States actively promoted the International Visitor program. Chadians participated in seminars on regional stability and conflict resolution, good governance, developing youth leadership skills, communication and technology, and the role of women in agricultural policy.

To help improve the professionalism of the Chadian military and consequently address human rights abuses, Chad participated in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. Several Chadian military officials attended training in the United States, and communications equipment and training were provided in Chad. The United States also provided training for several dozen Chadians in demining techniques to address nearly one million unexploded landmines in northern Chad.

The United States made more limited efforts to promote human rights in other areas, such as encouraging respect for the rights of women (including the prevention of female genital mutilation), promoting religious freedom and strengthening workers rights, largely through smaller programs. U.S. officials also worked regularly with religious and labor leaders to obtain information on local issues.

## **COMOROS**

The Union of Comoros is an emerging democracy that was ruled by President Azali Assoumani, who took power in a coup in April 1999, and subsequently was elected democratically in April 2002 presidential elections described by international observers as free and fair. The country consists of three islands (Grande Comore, Anjouan and Moheli) and claims a fourth (Mayotte), which is governed by France. Legislative elections, scheduled for March 2003, did not take place during the year. A December 2003 ministerial meeting resolved the few remaining issues pertaining to national reconciliation. Among the issues decided at the reconciliation talks was the date for legislative assembly elections, after which a committee will be formed to draft a new constitution. Local elections for the three islands are scheduled to take place in March 2004 with national elections scheduled for April 2004. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Prison conditions remained poor.

The Government restricted freedom of religion, and security forces reportedly continued to threaten Christians. Societal discrimination against women and Christians continued to be serious problems. There were some instances of forced child labor.

The United States relies on a combination of vigorous diplomacy and modest financial assistance to achieve its human rights objectives in Comoros ♦ encouraging national reconciliation and promoting human rights. Foreign Operations Appropriations Act Section 508 sanctions against Comoros, which had been in place since 1999, were lifted in December. The Embassy in Port Louis, Mauritius, mounted an aggressive campaign to send embassy personnel on a monthly basis to the country to work directly with the Government and to encourage stability and the development of a democratic framework. The Ambassador discussed professionalization of security forces and division of responsibilities between the internal and external security forces at the highest levels of the national and regional governments.

The Embassy worked in close cooperation with government representatives and neighboring embassies to increase security in the country through technical assistance in immigration techniques, customs practices and drug interdiction efforts. As a result of Section 508 sanctions being lifted, the Embassy focused on political and economic stability, counter-terrorism and education, all against a backdrop of furthering awareness of human rights and the functioning of democratic institutions.

In 2003, the Embassy administered Self Help and Democracy and Human Rights Fund projects totaling \$35,800 in the Union of Comoros. Eight projects aiding community-based education and women's empowerment were funded.

## **CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is only just beginning to emerge from a bloody, chaotic war that claimed more than three million lives. With the assistance of the international community, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue resulted in the formation of a government of national reconciliation, but the country is far from reunited or reconciled. Rather, the echoes of the war continue to haunt the country in the form of myriad victims of widespread human rights violations. The extent of this tragedy is only now beginning to emerge. Women and children have been ♦ and continue to be ♦ the most frequently and horribly brutalized. Rape as a weapon of war was freely wielded in the DRC, and both women and children were victims. Both groups also were kidnapped and forced to serve as child soldiers or sex slaves. In some parts of the country all pretense of social order collapsed, and many institutions ♦ particularly of justice ♦ remain moribund. The transitional government is preparing the country for democratic elections in 2005, the first such elections in the DRC in more than 40 years. There is also progress, albeit halting, on the

problem of child soldiers. Police remain unprofessional, corrupt, under-paid (often unpaid) and under-equipped. Magistrates and lawyers are in similar straits.

In areas under central government control, the Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements, serious problems remained. Security forces committed unlawful killings, torture, beatings, acts of rape, extortion and other abuses, largely with impunity. Prison conditions in hundreds of local detention facilities, both legal and illegal, remained harsh and life threatening; however, conditions in some of the larger, centralized prisons improved. Arbitrary arrest and prolonged pre-trial detention remained problems. Before the formation of the transition government in July 2003, the Government supplied and coordinated operations with Mai Mai, who committed numerous, serious abuses, including killings, rape, torture, the kidnapping of civilians and the recruitment of children as combatants. The Government restricted worker rights. Child labor, the use of child soldiers by the Armed Forces and child prostitution remained problems. The human rights record in areas not under central government control remained extremely poor, and rebel authorities continued to commit numerous, serious abuses, particularly in the east, including North and South Kivu and the Ituri district of Orientale Province. These abuses included deliberate large-scale killings, the burning of villages, disappearances, torture, rape, dismemberment, mutilation, looting, extortion, and robbery. Prison conditions, particularly in underground prisons, were harsh and life-threatening. Arbitrary arrest and detention continued to be problems. The judiciary continued to be controlled and manipulated by the ruling authorities and subject to corruption. Rebel groups severely restricted freedom of speech, assembly, association and movement in areas under their control, and respect for religious freedom remained poor. There were attacks against local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in rebel-held areas, and some NGO personnel and UN peacekeepers were killed.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy reinforces the importance of democracy and human rights. When President Bush and Secretary of State Powell met with President Kabila in November 2003, they emphasized U.S. support for the transitional government and the need for continued progress on political reforms, security sector reform and human rights concerns as a critical element in the transition. In December, visiting U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine Chao met with President Kabila to underscore the need to expand efforts to end child soldiering in the Congo. The United States has repeatedly stressed to President Kabila the importance of adhering to the elections schedule and ensuring that the Congolese people are well prepared for elections. The United States served as a member of the International Committee to Assist the Transition (CIAT). The Embassy also worked closely with the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese Independent Elections Commission to develop the most transparent and effective system possible for conducting elections. The United States continues to work with appropriate Congolese ministries, such as Human Rights, Social Affairs and Defense, to encourage the development of a national Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) plan.

The Embassy worked with local NGOs and women's groups to begin developing a series of programs aimed at assisting women, particularly the victims of rape. Embassy staff also visited 11 provinces throughout the year and held discussions with local officials, NGOs, church organizations and members of the local media to underscore the importance of democratic elections and basic human rights. The Embassy used its relationship with government officials to encourage the transitional government to establish an inter-agency working group to discuss human rights issues.

Through its implementing partners, the U.S. Agency for International Development delivered \$1.5 million worth of programming targeting democracy-building and assistance to vulnerable groups. The United States granted \$450,000 to Global Rights to provide support for vulnerable groups, transitional justice and democratic transition. In July 2003, Global Rights helped a Kinshasa-based organization of indigenous peoples to complete an investigation of the human rights situation of the Twa (pygmies), following the atrocities committed against them. Also in July, Global Rights organized a special expanded edition of its monthly forum on transitional justice. These regular meetings provide the best opportunity for dialogue between Congolese rights groups, UN agencies and representatives of development agencies and diplomatic missions. Global Rights also underwrites the work of the Strategic Law Group, which reviewed Congo's transitional constitution to identify the key legislation required by it. In November and December of 2003, Global Rights hosted a series of consultations in Lubumbashi, Goma, Bukavu, Kisangani and Kindu to apprise civil society leaders of pending legislation, distribute copies of proposed laws and educate these groups on how they can make their voices heard in the legislative process.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) received \$1.1 million to build political parties and support the electoral process. In 2003, NDI created a resource center focused on teaching consensus building-skills and encouraging dialogue among political leaders, information sharing and improved communication between politicians and constituents. They sponsored a series of political "town hall" meetings in Lubumbashi, Bukavu and Kisangani, bringing together political leaders, civil society and interested persons. IFES managed resource centers in Lubumbashi, Kinshasa and Kikwit, offering reference materials on political education to the general public. IFES also produces "Dépêches," a weekly bulletin sent to more than 85 civil society partners in the DRC's 11 provinces. Finally, IFES provides technical support to the Independent Elections Commission and formed an election law task group to produce recommendations facilitating a new election law.

To address the child soldier issue, President Kabila issued in 2003 a decree banning the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and the Congolese military is identifying and preparing to release these children on a priority basis. Militias, especially the largest group, the Mai Mai, are doing likewise. The process is haphazard, however, because the Government has not yet produced a coherent national plan for DDR. The lack of such a plan has kept international assistance to ex-combatants from flowing into the DRC. The

Embassy, closely coordinating with the CIAT, World Bank and others, has urged the Government to expeditiously complete the national plan and appoint a national coordinator, to enable the DDR process to truly get under way.

## **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 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 then. Internally displaced persons are returning to the Pool region, the area used by Ntumi's Ninjas as their base. At the end of 2003 about 2,000 displaced persons from Pool remained in Brazzaville.

For most of 2003 and early 2004 the government's human rights record improved but still remained poor. 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, and the judiciary was unable to ensure transparent and expeditious trials. Rebel militias also committed serious human rights abuses, though there were fewer reports after the signing of the March 2003 Peace Accord.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in the Republic of the Congo promotes respect for human rights. U.S. programs with the Government, media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations endeavor to strengthen respect for human rights.

To promote good governance, the United States provided a grant to a local NGO to conduct seminars on anti-corruption education for regional government officials and administrators. Through demarches, discussions with the Government and cooperation with the international community, the United States continued to stress the need for the Government to increase transparency in accounting for oil revenues and other public funds. The Government organized an Anti-Corruption Day, attended by local NGOs, Ministers and other government officials to emphasize the need for honesty in the public and private sectors. The United States supplied information to the Congolese president's anti-corruption office on conventions and steps taken by the African Union and Global Coalition on Africa on this issue. The United States, in connection with the Corporate Council on Africa, held a two-day speaker program in April followed by a

workshop in May to address the issue of best business practices, accountability and transparency as they related to the country's eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

In order to build general awareness of human rights among the population, the United States focused its efforts on youth, women and minorities. The United States used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund for programs on the rights of key minority groups such as the Twa (Pygmies) and prevention of trafficking in children. Through the Education for Development and Democracy Initiative, the United States supported funding of a local NGO to assist with scholarships for girls and girls ♦ HIV/AIDS education. The success of this program resulted in an Appreciation Award of \$143,750 in special additional funding in November 2003. Other grants were awarded to educate the Twa about their rights and protecting their environment and traditional ways for future generations for anti-corruption seminars, for refugee assistance, for job training for women (particularly abused women) and orphans, for food production, sheltering and schools supplies for internally displaced persons of the Pool, and trafficking in persons projects. Grants have amounted to about \$390,000 over three years.

To promote worker rights, the United States helped fund 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. U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine Chao traveled to the region in mid-December to officially launch the program.

Through dialogue and military training exchanges sponsored by the Department of Defense (DOD), the United States encouraged greater military discipline, professionalism and respect for human rights. A high commission was established in 2002 for the re-integration of former rebel militia members into society and into the military using World Bank (WB) funds. Some reintegration continued in 2003 under WB funding, and a new UN Development Program Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program is planned for 2004 with European Union funding to address the Ninja combatants from the March 2003 accords. Part of the March 2003 peace accords included a commitment from President Sassou that former Ninja militia would receive amnesty if they laid down their arms. In addition, the United States continued to support a DOD-funded English-language training program for military officers intended to facilitate other types of training.

## **C ♦ TE D ♦ IVOIRE**

The September 2002 coup attempt that grew into a rebellion threw C ♦ te d'Ivoire into its worst political crisis since independence in 1960. The fighting and subsequently established cease-fire line divided the country geographically and politically. Both the Government of C ♦ te d ♦ Ivoire and the rebel forces, which control the northern half of the country, committed serious human rights abuses. The past year



witnessed fitful progress toward national reconciliation and improvement in the human rights situation. Nonetheless, the Government and rebel forces' human rights records remained poor. At the beginning of 2003, the Government and New Forces (NF) committed serious abuses, and 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 most abuses to justice, and members of 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 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 limited freedom of movement within and from the territory they held and forcibly conscripted persons, including many child soldiers. Rebels and mercenaries committed particularly grave abuses in the western region of the country and in the north; under various rebel sub-leader warlords serious abuses were committed.

The promotion of human rights, including a well-formulated human rights strategy, is one of the highest priorities for the United States in Côte d'Ivoire. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy furthers the established national reconciliation process, strengthens civil society, and reduces the sense of impunity that prevails throughout the country. The long-term objective is to help Côte d'Ivoire consolidate its democratic multi-party system in which all Ivoirians have a voice and which is characterized by good governance, respect for fundamental human rights, an independent judiciary and a strong civil society. To that end, the United States has focused on promoting implementation of the January 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accords (LMA), which largely ended the fighting and framed the key issues that need to be resolved politically if a stable, peaceful Côte d'Ivoire is to emerge from the violence.

To press for LMA implementation as the basis for reconciliation on which greater democracy can be built and human rights insured, U.S. officials have maintained an extensive dialogue with the Government and all political parties and movements. The Ambassador is a key member of the UN Monitoring Committee

for LMA implementation and regularly pushes the Ivoirian President, the rebel NF and all other political parties to implement LMA as the way to reconciliation and to free and fair elections in 2005. U.S. 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 also issued strong public statements on human rights, which received widespread local press coverage.

To help build compromise and understanding in divided and crisis-ridden Côte d'Ivoire, in July 2003 the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the Embassy organized and sponsored a five-day "Compromise and Consensus Building for Sustainable Political Stability" workshop conducted by three internationally known experts. In conjunction with the Ministry of National Reconciliation, the United States invited representatives from the political parties and the NF to the workshop to teach them conflict prevention techniques and to identify potential areas of collaboration. In the same vein, in January 2004, PAS held a conference on Martin Luther King's non-violent philosophy and its application to the Ivoirian crisis in which more than 70 religious leaders, politicians and journalists took part.

Concerning tolerance and reconciliation, in November 2003, PAS hosted an Iftaar dinner for Ivoirian Islamic leaders. The Ambassador and other embassy officials used the occasion to discuss with the Ivoirian guests the openness of American society, its thriving Muslim community, and the cohabitation of diverse religion communities in the United States.

To add further impetus to the peace process and the protection of human rights, the U.S. has secured funding for a program to strengthen political parties and support national reconciliation through a \$400,000 grant to support the National Democratic Institute in three major activities: small scale, multi-party fora to work on accountability of elected officials and citizen rights and responsibilities, skills training in negotiating and conflict resolution to strengthen capacity and reduce polarization, and development of electronic and print civic education materials.

The United States used the International Visitor program to broaden the experience of Ivoirians who can make a difference on democracy and human rights. The United States hosted visitors to programs on "Women's Political Empowerment," "Transparency and Good Governance," "Religion and the Community," "Educating Youth for Future Leadership" and "Humanizing HIV/AIDS Education." For the coming 2004-2005 cycle, the Embassy put forward first rate candidates 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."

In 2003, the United States worked with the Ministry of Justice on defining areas of judicial reform that could be initiated with Fiscal Year 2003 Economic Support Funds. Recently, however, the European Union has come forward with about \$15 million for a thorough reform of the system. The U.S. Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) aided the Ivoirian Bar Association to extend free legal advice to people who otherwise would have no access to legal assistance.

In February, PAS sponsored a round table discussion on the rule of law, separation of powers and the importance of having an independent judiciary. 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 local news media have often worked to aggravate grievances and inflame tensions in Côte d'Ivoire, both before and after the outbreak of rebellion in September 2002. To make media reporting more impartial and balanced, the United States is using a \$436,000 Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) grant for a multi-layered media project, implemented by Internews and focused on projects to de-politicize the media, using a range of media improvement techniques: conducting management training sessions for committed media outlets; arranging an advertiser fair to assist program participants; providing a full-time print journalism trainer to assist in improving news coverage; training staff of targeted print media outlets to move reporters toward international journalism standards; mentoring and providing organizational assistance to journalists; professional watchdog organization; and organizing and conducting a town hall-style panel discussion series (the "International Standard Series") on important topics to boost the professionalism of local journalists and increase awareness of the role of responsible journalism.

In another project to strengthen the media and use local radio to reduce tensions and conflicts, the United States invested DHRF money in a community radio civic education campaign. A well known Ivoirian non-governmental organization (NGO), the Study and Research Group on Democracy and Social and Economic Development made broadcast recordings of key laws in 10 local languages, trained community radio announcers in the fundamental laws and use of the prepared cassettes, and distributed the cassettes to other human rights and democracy organizations, educators and activists.

During the year, the United States again emphasized human rights issues that affect women and children. The United States allocated \$22,000 in DHRF monies to a "Network of African Women Ministers" project to improve girls' access to and retention in schools and an additional \$14,000 to sustain Family Friends, a local NGO, in its campaign against the mistreatment of women and children in a remote part of Côte d'Ivoire. PAS 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 U.S. Agency for International Development, the International Labor Organization, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and the U.S. Chocolate Manufacturers Association conducted the last major study on child labor in Cote d'Ivoire in 2001. The survey research revealed that fully 96.7 percent (604,500 of 625,100) of children employed in the cocoa sector had a kinship relation with the farmer. In 2002, the ILO launched several studies on child labor and trafficking. Early findings revealed that in addition to child labor on farms, there were children working in artisan mines, construction, market places, the trades and the urban informal sector, especially in the south of the country.

Winrock International, an Embassy-supported American NGO, sponsored a November 2003 seminar on the "Problem of Child Labor and the Alternatives in Education in Cote d'Ivoire." At the seminar, Minister of National Education Michel Amani said, "It is parents' poverty that prevents children from going to school. To remedy that, the United States must favor equality among all the children and make school free and compulsory." The "Class" project (organized by Winrock International) aims to reduce child labor throughout the world. A pilot project, which focuses on areas where children regularly work on farms rather than go to school, is being carried out in Ehouogouie, near Agboville in southern Cote d'Ivoire.

## **DJIBOUTI**

Djibouti is a republic with a strong presidency and a weak legislature. Since the end of the civil war of the mid-1990s, Djibouti has seen a general decline in human rights abuses. The country however still lacks the institutional safeguards to prevent a return to widespread systemic abuses, and the Government has not yet shown the political will to hold people in positions of power to the rule of law. The Government's human rights record is poor, and government security forces continue to commit serious abuses with impunity. Opposition groups face harassment, and through explicit and implicit actions, the Government limits citizens' rights to change their government. The Government restricts unions, and harasses and intimidates their leaders. Child labor is also a serious issue.

Ismael Omar Guelleh won the presidential election with 74 percent of the vote in 1999. His party, the People's Rally for Progress (RPP), has ruled the country since independence in 1977. President Guelleh made a working visit to the White House in January 2003. The 2002 legislative elections were openly contested and the RPP party coalition won all 65 seats, mainly because of a system of "winner take all" by districts. Opposition candidates won around 37 percent of the vote and made claims of massive fraud. The Government has indicated that it will hold first-ever municipal elections in October 2004 and the next presidential election is scheduled for 2005. The judiciary is weakened by the presence of corrupt judges and

is influenced by the executive. Much of the country's wealth remains concentrated in the hands of a small elite, who also dominate politics.

The United States has entered into a close partnership with Djibouti in the Global War on Terrorism. Because Djibouti is the closest geographic point between the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, it is a natural choke point for Red Sea and Gulf of Aden naval traffic as well as an ideal port for trade between the regions. Djibouti hosts the only U.S. military base in sub-Saharan Africa.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Djibouti encourages respect for basic human rights, including labor rights, and supports democratization and legal reform. The United States has worked with the Djiboutian Government to overcome its legacy of human rights abuses. In a number of individual areas, the Embassy has coordinated with other donor nations and UN agencies to bring concerns about human rights to the attention of Djiboutian authorities. The Government has often responded positively to these moves. All training of Djiboutian military, police and other security forces by the Anti-Terrorist Activities program, the Combined Joint Task Force ♦ Horn of Africa and other U.S. civilian and military of organizations is accompanied by specific training on human rights. The Embassy advocated the removal of corrupt justices.

The Djiboutian Human Rights League received a Democracy and Human Rights Fund grant in 2003 to examine the penal code. Democratic and economic reform in Djibouti is the key to a successful long-term partnership between the United States and Djibouti. The United States will continue to ensure that support for progress is key in all public and private encounters with government officials.

Over the last several years, officials at all levels from the Embassy in Djibouti and regional labor officers from the Embassy in Addis Ababa have protested the Government's suppression of the labor movement. The Embassy publicly voiced U.S. concerns about real and potential human rights violations associated with the Government's policy of "refoulement" or expulsion of clandestine and undocumented workers in September 2003.

## **EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema has ruled Equatorial Guinea since seizing power in a 1979 military coup d'etat and continues to dominate all sectors of government. Obiang's Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea remains overwhelmingly dominant 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.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea ♦s human rights record remained poor, although there were some improvements in a few areas. Citizens ♦ ability to change their government peacefully

remained restricted. Security forces committed numerous abuses, including the use of torture and excessive force. There were reports of physical abuse of prisoners and suspects, arbitrary arrest and detention, and incommunicado detention. The judicial system was not independent. The Government severely restricted freedoms of speech and of the press; however, freedom of speech continued to improve marginally during the year. There were no effective domestic human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As such, the United States is working with international NGOs in the education and health sectors to strengthen civil society.

The expansion of democracy and the promotion of human rights remain the U.S.' primary objectives in Equatorial Guinea. The United States made efforts to achieve these objectives by actively engaging with government, opposition, media and community representatives. To increase progress toward these objectives, a U.S. Embassy reopened in Malabo. In 2003 and early 2004 public diplomacy programs aided the development of Equatorial Guinea's historically weak civil society. Embassy staff encouraged U.S. companies' cooperative involvement to reinforce the U.S. message on the importance of transparency, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

In 2003, U.S. efforts were principally focused on the re-opening of Embassy Malabo. The October re-inauguration of this small facility was a tangible symbol of the 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 serves as U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea. Embassy Yaounde personnel have continued to be actively engaged in all substantive and administrative areas, including the promotion of human rights.

The new embassy provides an outlet for more vigorous and continuous on-the-ground promotion of respect for human rights and democracy. The *Chargé d'Affaires* immediately assumed an important, publicly visible role in regularly and directly communicating U.S. concerns to local government officials. In-country representation allowed the State Department 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.

Prior to the embassy's opening, the United States leveraged the promise of a new diplomatic presence to encourage the country's leaders to make progress on human rights. As a result of this action, more than 30 prisoners were released, prison conditions improved and prison visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross were institutionalized.

Before and after the re-opening of the new embassy facility, Embassy Yaounde staff made regular visits to the island and mainland. U.S. officials also held public meetings with members of Equatorial Guinea's

small opposition movement to address their concerns. The Ambassador and other officers have an ongoing dialogue with officials on the need for the development of strong civil society institutions and respect for justice and human rights. In meetings on March 5 and 15, 2004, the Ambassador raised concerns with the President and high-level ministers over transparency, good governance and fair judicial practices and continued to condemn torture and harsh prison practices. At the Ambassador's urging, it appears that President Obiang is preparing to conduct a free and transparent trial of alleged coup plotters apprehended in March 2004. In meetings with President Obiang, the Ambassador expressed concern regarding the expulsion of non-Equatorial Guinea citizens following the recent coup attempt. Obiang appeared willing to take steps to redress the Ambassador's concerns.

The United States continued efforts to actively encourage effective and transparent management of the country's oil wealth for equitable social and economic development. High-level officials from the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs met President Obiang to discuss how Equatorial Guinea can properly channel its oil wealth toward improvements in areas such as police professionalism, health and education.

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 have been forthcoming: Following up on high-level statements of commitment to transparency in the oil and gas sector, Equatorial Guinea signed on to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

U.S. embassy officials based in Yaounde and Malabo maintained a positive working relationship with U.S. oil companies in Equatorial Guinea and have encouraged cooperative efforts between the companies and the Government. Beyond health and environmental assistance programs, these companies act as positive role models for how transparent employers operate, with clear hiring policies as well as good labor relations. Furthermore, the companies have reinforced U.S. messages on transparency, rule of law and human rights.

Embassy Yaounde's Public Affairs Section organized a seminar aimed at enhancing the professional skills of journalists in Equatorial Guinea, in which 25 journalists from both public and private media took part. Private press is nearly non-existent, and La Gacetta (printed in Spain) has a circulation of 2,000. The embassy's Information Officer met with the Minister of Information and the Director General of the National Radio and TV in Equatorial Guinea to chart out new and better ways of collaboration. Embassy officers also publicly met with members of the Association of the Press of Equatorial Guinea (ASOPGE), an organization that acts as a press association and produces its own journals. Although it has been subjected to heavy government pressure in the past, ASOPGE representatives now report that a limited relaxation of press restrictions has allowed the press to occasionally criticize government social services.

## **ERITREA**

Eritrea became independent in 1993 when citizens voted overwhelmingly for independence from Ethiopia. However, Eritrea's constitution has not been implemented and the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice is the only legal party. Unfortunately, progress toward democracy in Eritrea suffered a major setback in 2001, when the Government arrested prominent persons who voiced opposition to government policy and shut down the nascent free press. Elections, which had been scheduled for December 2001, have been postponed indefinitely. Two Foreign Service National employees of Embassy Asmara have been held incommunicado without formal charges since October 11, 2001. The Government continued to seriously restrict the religious freedom of non-sanctioned religious groups. A local journalist who submitted dispatches to the Voice of America was detained in 2003, and is still being held in a military camp. These government actions have halted or reversed progress toward realizing Eritrea's self-stated goals of establishing a multi-party democracy with a free press and a market-based economy.

The Government's human rights record remained poor. Arbitrary arrest and detention remain a problem. The Constitution has not been implemented, National Assembly elections have not been held and a multi-party system does not exist. The judiciary is subject to executive control. The independent press remains closed, effectively restricting freedom of speech and the press. Hundreds of individuals have been arrested for practicing their faith and many have been subjected to torture and isolation in an attempt to force them to recant their religious beliefs.

The United States maintains an active dialogue with the Government of the State of Eritrea on human rights and democracy. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Eritrea encourages Eritrea to return to the path of democratization, implement its constitution and allow a genuinely free press, true religious freedom, a multi-party political system and free elections.

The worrisome refusal by the Government to act on concerns that the United States and others have raised about its commitment to democratization and human rights has led to limits on some plans for broader cooperation. The United States has made clear to the Government that increased cooperation with the United States depends on its demonstrated improvement with respect to democracy and human rights.

The U.S. strategy also entails efforts to extend access to information throughout the country, through encouraging use of the Internet, the embassy's Information Resource Center ("The American Center") in Asmara, including its free Internet access, and Embassy-sponsored "American Corners" in libraries outside the country's capital as tools to promote democracy and appreciation of human rights through greater access to information. The strategy is also designed to contribute to economic and political devolution so



that citizens can exercise more control over their affairs. The United States is also working to strengthen civil society and community-based organizations.

Despite strong government resistance to what is perceived as foreign meddling, with carefully targeted efforts, the United States can point to important accomplishments to promote democracy and human rights. For example, in the absence of a free press, the Internet has become one of the few means for a small but growing number of Eritreans to have access to independent views and information. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which was instrumental in bringing the Internet to Eritrea (the last country in Africa to have it), is providing 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 of cheap, efficient, reliable Internet access. In 2003, USAID funded consultants to develop a technical assessment of the network operations center, which is responsible for managing Eritrea's international Internet link. USAID also funded consultants to assist Eritrea's development of a strong legal and regulatory regime for telecommunications. The Public Affairs Section is also conducting Internet training classes.

In an effort to build support for democratic reform and human rights among opinion leaders, the Embassy holds regular functions for alumni of U.S.-sponsored exchange programs to facilitate interactions among these influential Eritreans, and promotes discussion of democracy and its principles through speaking engagements featuring embassy staff, the U.S. Speakers Program, the "Africa Journal," the International Visitor and Voluntary Visitor programs, and direct contacts with government officials.

The United States conducts informational outreach in order to promote U.S. policies and values, to introduce Eritreans to the U.S. experience of democratic governance, to foster familiarity with American culture and to enhance mutual understanding between the countries. This outreach extends to libraries and educational institutions and promotes increased use of the embassy's well-equipped Information Resource Center as a source of information about U.S. policies, values and culture. In 2003, in partnership with the authorities of an important regional center with a predominantly Muslim population, the United States established the first American Corner at a local municipal library. The local Muslim community extensively patronizes this facility and its resources.

The United States supports activities that devolve political power and economic resources by providing resources and expertise to promote the development of community-based organizations (CBOs) and complementary skills and understanding for local government authorities to work effectively with CBOs. In 2003, training programs on management of CBOs were provided to more than 20 organizations including parent-teacher organizations and water associations in 23 Eritrean communities.

## **ETHIOPIA**

The Ethiopian Government continues its transition from a centralized system of government to ethnic federalism. However, bureaucratic power-sharing arrangements between the national and regional governments, civil conflict, poverty 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 some unlawful killings. The Government continued to arrest and detain some persons arbitrarily, particularly those associated with opposition groups. The judiciary remained overburdened and lacked capacity, resulting in lengthy pre-trial detentions. Societal discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS continued. Trafficking in persons remained a serious problem, as well as societal discrimination and violence against women.

The U.S. strategy to promote 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. The Ambassador engaged government officials, including Ministers, privately at times, to seek clarification on government actions that could infringe upon human rights. With respect to human rights, U.S. 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. The embassy's website posts annual human rights, trafficking in persons, child labor and related human rights reports and also highlights the Ambassador's speeches, activities and press releases which include human rights themes.

To call attention to problems of ethnic violence, the Embassy engaged the Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to ensure that proper investigations were conducted. After a series of deadly ethnic clashes in the Fugnido refugee camp in Gambella region in 2002, the Embassy took up the matter with officials of the Ethiopian refugee agency and the UNHCR and called for a transparent investigation into the camp violence. The ensuing investigation resulted in the arrests of four regional government officials, who were charged with inciting violence, and 25 refugees and local residents. In a related incident in which 32 members of one ethnic group in Gambella were forced off a bus by police officials of another ethnic group and subsequently killed, close monitoring of the case by the Embassy helped ensure that ten regional government officials, including four police officers, were arrested in connection with the killings. The Ambassador sent a consular/security team to Gambella when ethnic violence broke out in December, and the Ambassador and embassy officials have continued to engage the Government as this latest incident continued.

The Embassy is supporting the Ethiopian Federal Police in its efforts to overhaul itself into an effective, professional force. The Embassy obtained a \$500,000 grant from the State Department's Bureau of International Law Enforcement and Narcotics to provide curriculum development training to federal police

instructors and to launch a community-policing project. Officials from the U.S. Department of Justice conducted a week long survey of some of the most pressing needs of the police force. Forty instructors completed a two-week course taught by two law enforcement professionals on developing a curriculum that emphasized practical applications of police skills rather than theory. In addition, the Embassy sponsored capacity-building training for approximately 16 local law enforcement officials in the area of criminal investigation, held at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana.

To help build the capacity of Ethiopia's judicial system, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) continued to fund a program conducted by the Federal Supreme Court. During 2003, 1,244 High Court and Supreme Court justices completed the training. More than 3,000 judges have benefited from this training since the program's inception.

The embassy's Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) provided financial support totaling \$70,000 to six organizations during Fiscal Year 2003. One beneficiary was the Ethiopian Bar Association, which used its DHRF grant to support a pro-bono legal clinic. Nearly 400 people benefited from the work of this clinic in 2003. Another DHRF beneficiary was Hope for the Horn, which focused its efforts on providing human rights education in the Somali region by translating the Universal Declaration on Human Rights into the Somali language, and holding discussion groups on how it impacts people's lives.

To build awareness of democratic concepts, the Embassy hosted four speakers to address issues of democracy and the role of universities, minority rights, conflict resolution and NGO management. An embassy-sponsored journalism instructor taught a two-day course to local journalists on professional ethics and investigative reporting. A visiting State Department official from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor spoke to a group of Addis Ababa University law students about the work of that bureau in promoting human rights worldwide. The Embassy also sent 20 Ethiopians to America on International Visitor programs that focused on such issues as the U.S. judicial system, investigative journalism and accountability in government and business. One beneficiary of the State Department's Voluntary Visitor program in 2003 was the Acting Secretary General of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, who used his visit to meet with Members of Congress and international human rights organizations. Another beneficiary of the Voluntary Visitor program was the Vice Minister of Justice, who learned more about judicial training programs and crime prevention mechanisms, as well as legal issues regarding NGOs.

To promote political freedoms, the Embassy, working with other embassies, engaged local officials and the National Election Board (NEB) about complaints from opposition political parties about harassment of their members by ruling party members. An embassy representative traveled to the Amhara and Southern regions to investigate allegations of illegal detentions, harassment and torture of opposition party supporters by local ruling party cadres. The visit resulted in the subsequent release from detention of three

opposition party members, and a promise by local officials to investigate the incidents. An embassy representative also visited local district bipartisan committees established to resolve disputes between government and opposition parties. After the visit, when it became apparent that no reports about any of the incidents had been forwarded to the NEB, and no actions had been taken, the Embassy called upon the NEB to produce the reports and take appropriate action against perpetrators. A letter sent by the U.S. and other embassies to the Ethiopian Government asking it to fulfill its human rights reporting requirements to the United Nations met with a subsequent commitment from the Government to do just that.

The Embassy supported efforts to encourage respect for the rights of women and children. The Kembatta Women's Self-Help Center used a DHRF grant to create awareness among residents of a rural community about the harmful effects of traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation (FGM). As a result of its workshops, nearly 35 couples have spoken out publicly against FGM.

U.S. Labor Department representatives met with leaders of government and private labor organizations in the country, with a view to implementing a range of programs to raise awareness and fight discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

To combat the trafficking of women and children from Ethiopia to the Middle East, the United States continued to oversee a \$383,000 State Department 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, due to the lack of availability of teachers to undergo project-related training.

To curb the incidence of illegal adoptions, the Ambassador and embassy officers 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.

## **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, President since 1967, was reelected for a seven-year term in a 1998 election marred by irregularities. In July of 2003, Parliament passed a constitutional amendment facilitating a presidency for life.

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 were problems, and the judiciary remained subject to government influence. Forced labor, child labor and trafficking — particularly in children — remained problems. Gabon does not yet

have a law specifically outlawing trafficking in persons and this has impeded the investigation and prosecution of cases.

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, 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 funded the efforts of the NGO Anti-Slavery International to hold capacity-building seminars on child trafficking prevention in March 2003 in Gabon. A local attorney active in this area was sent to a U.S.-sponsored program on the subject. The National Assembly passed a law prohibiting the trafficking in persons in 2003. Its adoption requires approval by the Senate.

The United States worked closely with journalists to improve professionalism and promote freedom of speech. A Paris based journalist traveled to Gabon under U.S. auspices in October 2003 and conducted several journalism seminars in both the capital, Libreville, and in the city of Port-Gentil.

In the area of women's rights, the United States made available a grant to CORFEM, the largest women's organization in Gabon to provide materials and equipment to a resource center and for the development of the organization's website.

## **GAMBIA, THE**

The human rights situation in The Gambia improved significantly in recent years and U.S. engagement on human rights impelled 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 in certain cases. Most foreign observers did not recognize the 1996 presidential elections, which failed to meet democratic standards. The situation has improved significantly, however, in recent years. 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 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act Section 508 sanctions that had been imposed 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 based on the criteria set forth in the law, including a commitment to democracy and human rights.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Security forces harassed or otherwise mistreated journalists, detainees, prisoners and opposition party members. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems; however, unlike in the previous year, there were no reports 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. Unlike in previous years, the Government did not restrict freedom of assembly in 2003 and early 2004. 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 a few reports of trafficking.

Using the successful presidential election in October 2001 as well as the legislative and local elections in 2002 as a foundation, the United States has established a frank, constructive dialogue with the Government of The Gambia on human rights and other sensitive topics. 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 the connection between the restoration of democratic rule and respect for human rights on the one hand, with the benefits of improved relations with the United States on the other.

As a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) non-presence country, the Embassy 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 (ESF), the Democracy and Human Rights Fund and the USAID regional programs for West Africa on HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution and business initiatives.

Embassy 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 arrest of several allegedly corrupt officials, including some very senior officials, as well as the detention of some allegedly corrupt, prominent businessmen. Investigations continue; some formal charges have been made and one trial has already begun.

In view of the upcoming 2006 presidential election and subsequent legislative elections, the Embassy continues to make strong efforts to promote and consolidate democracy. In 2003, the Embassy supported a radio station by providing an FM-extension amplifier, which enabled the station to widen its coverage, increasing the accessibility of the civic education to previously unreachable parts of the country. The United States is helping the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to set up a website that will enable all

Gambians, especially those outside the country, to participate in all national elections. Through its contacts with the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute and other democracy building organizations, the Embassy is encouraging the IEC to develop an absentee voter system, a project that is highly anticipated by the opposition.

Because the legislature remains a relatively weak branch of the Government, the United States is using a \$300,000 ESF 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.

U.S. engagement with the Government of The Gambia has produced significant dividends in 2003, including substantial modifications to the media commission law that removed judicial powers from the commission to returned them to the courts, in line with the country's constitution.

Embassy 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 also coordinates with other diplomatic missions, as appropriate, when addressing specific human rights concerns.

To foster more professional security forces and reduce the tendency for human rights abuses, the United States resumed non-lethal military assistance immediately after Section 508 sanctions were lifted. 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.

U.S. efforts to end discrimination against certain disadvantaged groups include funding for the National Women's Bureau and the local chapter of the Special Olympics. The National Women's Bureau 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 taken the lead in financially and morally supporting the newly formed Child Protective Alliance (CPA) by providing sorely needed assistance for workshops and training seminars, purchasing office furniture and equipment, as well as hiring an additional administrative office member. The CPA, a coalition of a broad cross-section of organizations, has been effective in creating awareness about sexual exploitation, one of the most serious challenges to children's health, education and general well-being.

Religious harmony is the norm in the Gambia. To bolster religious freedom, the Embassy was able to promote interfaith dialogue by sending prominent Muslim cleric Imam Baba Leigh to the United States on an International Visitor program.

## **GUINEA**

The Republic of Guinea held presidential elections on December 21, 2003, reelecting President Lansana Conte to a third term (this one for seven years). 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 three unlawful killings by security forces during 2003. 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, 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 such as the Government, political parties, civil society, local government and the military.

The Ambassador consistently holds up 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 also stressed the need for dialogue in resolving disputes between the Government and political parties in the period before presidential elections. These efforts continue in the wake of President Conte's reelection, as set forth in the embassy's statement commenting on the election and encouraging continued political dialogue between the Government and the opposition. The Ambassador also met with government officials to emphasize human rights in response to certain high profile detentions during the year. 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 U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) democracy and governance program influences the democratic process from the bottom up through training of citizens, locally elected officials and representatives of government technical services, and top-down through the facilitation of dialogue and building capacity to respond to citizen demands at the national level. The United States supports the International Foundation for Election Systems in its effort to liberalize the media and to promote civil society through civic education. USAID funds the Cooperative League of the USA's activities that seek to increase citizen participation and promote better and more transparent governance at the local level. The United States has also funded activities of the National Democratic Institute in promoting dialogue between political parties and encouraging greater participation of women and youth in political parties. USAID 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 advocate for citizen interests with the administration.

Almost all Public Affairs Section (PAS) programs are based on respect for the right of individuals to express their views freely, the right of the public to information (including information about government actions, policies and programs) and the right of people to choose their leaders. In addition, PAS programs encourage open discussion on all topics relating to U.S.-Guinean relations and particularly American concepts of democracy and human rights. The United States has also supported democracy and human rights by sending Guineans on International Visitor (IV) programs related to human rights and democracy. Six Guineans participated in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 or are expected to take part in FY 2004 IV programs on topics related to good governance and transparency, conflict resolution and journalism.

In 2002, the Embassy provided military training to a full battalion (approximately 800 troops) from the Guinean Armed Forces (GAF). 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 material covered was reinforced repeatedly throughout the six-month training. The Defense Attaché's Office (DAO) also provides annual seminars to the GAF and select civilians on subjects including military law, defense resource management, human rights and civil-military relations. In 2003, for example, the DAO organized a sub-regional seminar on defense budgeting, which was attended not only by Guinean military personnel and bureaucrats involved in the budget process, but their counterparts from six neighboring nations.

The Embassy annually receives more than \$70,000 in Democracy and Human Rights Fund money, which has over the past year gone to projects promoting the rights of women, students and teachers and victims of HIV/AIDS, combating female genital mutilation, and providing training in conflict resolution and

responsible media. The program also has funded projects researching the role of the press in local elections and providing Internet access to legal documents.

Funding continued to flow from U.S. Labor Department 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.

## **GUINEA-BISSAU**

At the beginning of 2003, the last strands of Guinea-Bissau's democracy were unraveling. In November 2002, President Kumba Yala dissolved the National Assembly and declared a government by presidential decree. During the years following his 2000 election, Yala undermined the independence and legitimacy of the courts, press, political parties, civil bureaucracy and military. Yala detained opponents without charges. The judicial system was almost completely dysfunctional. On September 14, 2003, after promised legislative elections were delayed a fourth time by Yala, a bloodless military coup led by Chief of Defense Verissimo Seabra removed Yala from power. Civilians were appointed as transitional President and Prime Minister. On September 28, military, political party and civil society leaders signed the Pact of Transition, giving the Transitional Government of Guinea-Bissau a mandate to conduct legislative elections within six months and presidential elections a year later.

U.S. strategy is one of constructive engagement. The coup triggered sanctions under Foreign Operations Appropriations Act Section 508, preventing direct government-to-government assistance until an elected government takes office in Guinea-Bissau. Considering that the transitional government could represent an improvement over the Yala regime with regard to rule of law, transparency and good favor with the international community and the Bissau-Guinean people, the Embassy used Section 508 sanctions to encourage the Government to keep its promises of timely elections and good governance. In a series of demarches ♦ from the Embassy ♦s political officer to the President of Guinea-Bissau, Prime Minister and other Ministers, from Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Pamela Bridgewater to the government's Special Representative, and from the Ambassador to President Rosa ♦ the Embassy explained to the Government that the United States would continue to aid the people of Guinea-Bissau through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local communities with the Ambassador's Special Self Help Fund, the European Command (EUCOM) Humanitarian Assistance Program, an Economic Support Fund and Development Assistance project in cashew processing and humanitarian demining. The Embassy also recommended continued African Growth and Opportunity Act eligibility for Guinea-Bissau. These measures demonstrated a desire to work constructively with Guinea-Bissau. The Government announced March 28, 2004 legislative elections, which it promised would lead to an elected prime minister and government.

September 14 marked the occurrence of the third military coup in Guinea-Bissau's 30 years of independence from Portugal. The Embassy aims to foster a more professional military in Guinea-Bissau that can contribute to, rather than detract from, regional stability. In the summer of 2003, EUCOM evaluated a 650-man Bissau-Guinean battalion in preparation for ECOMIL, the ECOWAS Peace-Keeping Operation (PKO) in Liberia, which later became a UN PKO. The Embassy paid careful attention to Leahy Amendment human rights vetting, and Guinea-Bissau's battalion received positive reviews from EUCOM and earned valuable professional experience.

Yala left no functioning institutions in Guinea-Bissau. To conduct free and fair elections, outside observers will be required. The Embassy requested that the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute or similar organizations assist in monitoring the March 28 legislative election.

Political parties and civil society, being too intimidated to act as a counterweight to Yala's rule, were not accustomed to the responsibilities of civic participation. A Ford Foundation grant to two Senegalese NGOs funded a conference of Bissau-Guinean civil society, political, military and government leaders during the December 19-21 period. Most participants in the conference signed a declaration outlining civil society's expectations of good governance.

Though large-scale human rights abuses did not occur in Guinea-Bissau this year, isolated incidents occurred during Yala's presidency, due to corrupt and underpaid officials, inadequate training of magistrates and attorneys, and scarce resources to support the courts. The United States seeks opportunities to build capacity in Guinea-Bissau's justice system through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, the International Visitor program and assistance to Guinea-Bissau's only law school.

Many areas of Guinea-Bissau were not within the range of radio broadcasts. A U.S. NGO, Open Society, assisted several Bissau-Guinean radio stations with equipment and training. As a result, the number of Bissau-Guineans with access to independent radio broadcasts increased.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is still common in rural parts of Guinea-Bissau. The United States supports a local NGO that convinced 36 practitioners to abandon FGM and employ alternative rituals.

Many Bissau-Guinean boys in rural areas are sent to Koranic schools in Dakar, Senegal and elsewhere. While many of the schools provide genuine religious training, others exploit the children by using them as street beggars to earn money for the leadership. The United States assists local authorities with anti-trafficking capabilities. A U.S. anti-trafficking team provided training to Senegalese police.

## **KENYA**

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, tackling corruption, drafting a new constitution and re-energizing the economy. These hopes have been only partially fulfilled. The Government has passed anti-corruption legislation and removed some allegedly corrupt judges, but no senior officials have been prosecuted for corruption. 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 \$1 a day. Despite some progress, Kenya's human rights record remains poor in many areas. The Government continues to restrict freedom of speech and assembly on occasion. The non-military security forces continue to inflict torture and physical violence on detainees; some police officers have recently been arrested and accused of torture. Female genital mutilation, child labor and trafficking in persons also continue to be problems.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy consisted of strengthening electoral processes, rule of law, civil society and media, combating corruption and resolving conflict. To build on the success of the 2002 general election, the United States continued to support the electoral process in Kenya in 2003. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) obligated a total of \$850,000 for electoral support, the bulk of which went to the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). The IFES grant was used to improve the capacity of the Electoral Commission of Kenya to use information technology. The Carter Center also received \$200,000 to field a team of international observers during Kenya's election. An indicator of success in these efforts was that two 2003 by-elections were competently administered and violence-free. In addition, there were no politically motivated arrests during 2003.

Additionally, in June, Kenya actively participated in the Dialogue on Democracy hosted by Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky. In this Community of Democracies project, Kenya worked with other democratic states from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss and develop inter- and intra-regional dialogues, institutions and strategies for the purpose of strengthening the global framework of democracy.

Another component of the U.S. democracy and human rights strategy in Kenya is strengthening the rule of law. A key objective is the adoption of a new constitution (to replace the 1963 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. President Bush raised constitutional reform with President Kibaki during the latter's October visit to the United States, and Secretary of State Powell followed up during his October visit to Kenya. On March 16, 2004, the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission adopted a new draft constitution. However, the Kibaki government walked out of the deliberations in protest over its content, portending the likelihood of a vituperative debate in parliament over the constitution's adoption.

Prior to 2003, the U.S. rule of law program in Kenya was limited to supporting civil society organizations, which has been critical to enhancing support for rule of law initiatives. In 2003, 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 \$225,000 USAID grant. In 2003, ICJ utilized public perceptions of the Kenyan judiciary as a lobbying tool to advocate for the removal of corrupt judges in the country and for reform of the judicial system. The Federation of Women Lawyers received a USAID grant for \$144,000 to work toward improving the legislative and policy framework for women's rights.

In addition to support to civil society, and in light of the new government's commitment to strengthening the rule of law, the United States began providing direct financial assistance to the Government in 2003. Initial support assisted Kenya in developing its five-year strategy for improving the rule of law. USAID has also aided several grantees to develop programs of assistance for torture and trauma victims.

In 2003, 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, USAID provided \$600,000 to the State University of New York. Now in its third 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 \$100,000 grant to improve parliamentarians' ability to effectively analyze the budget. Prior to this U.S. program, 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 2003, the Government passed two anti-corruption bills, one that sets rules for transparency and accountability and another that requires certain public officials to declare their wealth and that of their spouses. Another bill designed to tackle corruption in procurement has been introduced. The presidency created a new office under a permanent secretary to spearhead the fight against corruption and, in May 2003, the Minister of Finance fired all procurement officers in public offices. A complementary public service integrity program was established to improve management practices in public offices and a commission of inquiry was established to investigate corruption involving export compensation scandals in the early 1990s.

U.S. strategy in support of this anti-corruption initiative focused in large part on support to civil society. A USAID grant to Transparency International's Kenya (TI/K) chapter, totaling \$494,700, was in its fourth year of implementation. Key elements of the grant include conducting research to provide benchmarks of

integrity and efficiency in public organizations, increasing public awareness of corruption and serving as a secretariat for the African Parliamentarians Network against Corruption. Similarly, the Center for Governance and Development (CGD) was in the second year of a two-year \$250,000 USAID 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. CGD monitored developments in various economic sectors to ensure that new legislation addressing corruption was implemented effectively. TI/K and CGD efforts were instrumental in the enactment of recent anti-corruption legislation, including the Economic Crimes and Anti-Corruption Act and the Public Officers' Ethics Act, as well as key regulatory changes that promoted transparency in the conduct of the elections.

USAID also obligated approximately \$1.5 million to support the Government directly in its anti-corruption initiative. USAID supported the newly created Office of the President's Department of Ethics and Governance by helping develop a system for recording and analyzing assets disclosure forms. The United States also supported the creation of a Public Complaints officer that would allow the private sector to report corruption-related issues and problems and that would promote transparency and accountability in the private sector. A component of the training provided by the U.S. Defense Resource Management Institute to 33 senior Kenyan military officers in 2003 stressed the importance of managing defense resources as a public trust, rather than a personal kitty. Despite these efforts, Kenyan courts have yet to convict key personalities involved in corruption and U.S. businesses remain wary about investing in the country.

The embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS) supports press freedom and other democracy and human rights objectives with a number of its annual programs (budgeted at more than \$700,000 with additional support from Washington bureaus). In Fiscal Year 2003, for example, 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 Kenya-specific 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 PAS Information Resource Center featured outreach projects on responsible media, U.S. courts, trafficking in persons and state and local government. PAS has also been urging the new Kenyan Government to create a press spokesman's office to help articulate government policy and field requests for access to government information.

Another component of U.S. strategy is to ensure that the Kenyan security forces remain apolitical and not commit human rights abuses. To this end, the State and Defense Departments, through the International Military Education and Training program, provided training in the United States in 2003 to four Kenyan military officers; the training included observations of how the U.S. military operated apolitically in a democratic country. In addition, the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies provided training in

Kenya to 40 mid-grade and senior Kenyan military officers in military law and legal systems. Also in 2003, the Embassy's Regional Security Office sponsored seven training courses for 225 Kenyan security personnel in anti-terrorism and law enforcement. All seven courses included classes in how human rights and international law pertain to arrest and detention.

Although political and ethnic violence has decreased in Kenya, inter-communal violence occasionally crosses borders with Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. To this end, 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, USAID's Regional Office in Kenya supported the Addis Ababa-based Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). CEWARN is a protocol among member countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development that was signed in 2002 and made effective in 2003. USAID and CEWARN activities in Kenya have focused on building capacity among government and non-governmental organizations to address conflict in the Karamoja cluster, the cross-border area of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, and in the Somali cluster, the cross-border area of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

Two of the State Department's Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) awards in 2003 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 DHRF grants were awarded in 2003 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. 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 which equipped women candidates in Kenya with the skills necessary to run effective political campaigns.

Another focus of U.S. attention was on labor practices. In the final year of a three-year \$200,061 grant for labor law reform funded by the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, the International Labor Organization (ILO) continued the assessment and revision of Kenya's labor law to bring it into full conformity with the principles of the ILO and the African Growth and Opportunity Act and to address issues such as child labor, discrimination and civil service reform. Sensitization of parliamentarians and other stakeholders on the need for the new law began in 2003. Another DHRF grant, awarded in late 2002 but largely implemented in 2003, was for the re-registration of the civil service union following a 20-year ban. In 2003, the union organized 15,000 of its potential 40,000 members and began to lobby for civil servant rights.

In 2003, Kenya was also in the final year of a three-year \$4,743,658 East Africa regional project with ILO's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor to identify, withdraw and rehabilitate approximately 7,500 children working under hazardous conditions on plantations and to provide families with viable alternatives to child labor. To complement this program, the World Bank with U.S. support has given Kenya a \$50 million grant to support its free primary education project, making it easier for families to choose school over work.

The Embassy designed the various components in its strategy to be complementary. Better governmental checks and balances and an improved judicial system help combat corruption and create a more attractive environment for badly needed economic investment. Conflict prevention contributes to regional stability and reduces the incidence of HIV/AIDS transmission, drug trafficking and arms smuggling. 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.

## **LESOTHO**

In May 2002, Lesotho held its first free and fair parliamentary elections not marred by post-election violence since the restoration of democracy in 1993. The ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy won 79 of 120 seats in the new mixed member proportional representation system introduced that year. Nine opposition parties divided the remaining 41 seats. Nevertheless, the largest opposition party, the Basotho National Party (BNP), claimed that the elections were flawed and has refused to formally accept the results even while taking its 22 seats in the National Assembly. In 2003, the BNP filed a number of court cases contesting various aspects of the elections, and has refused to participate in several by-elections held to fill vacancies caused by the deaths of incumbents. The Government has generally respected the human rights of its citizens, although problems continue with the police, primarily in the use of excessive force. There were unconfirmed allegations of torture by security forces. Prison conditions were poor, and lengthy pretrial detention was a problem. The military is successfully making the transition to a more professional and apolitical institution. The judiciary is under-staffed and under-funded. Rapid expansion of the garment industry has produced labor issues, due in part to the inexperience of the labor unions. Child prostitution, fueled by the creation of orphans by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, is a small but growing problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Lesotho supports the consolidation of democracy, strengthens the judiciary, law enforcement, and civil society, promotes worker rights and seeks to professionalize the military. In its efforts to promote the consolidation of democracy, the United States remained heavily engaged with both the Government and the opposition over the course of 2003 and early 2004 to ensure that the BNP's complaints remained peaceful, including intervening with both the party and the police to keep a February demonstration from becoming violent. A U.S.-supported program run by the



National Democratic Institute (NDI) trained party representatives in such party-building areas as fund-raising, volunteer organization, public outreach, platform development and articulation, and internal party democratization. The aim was to prepare the parties both for the general elections scheduled for 2007 and new local government elections scheduled for 2004. This program exemplified donor coordination: The United States focused on party building while other donors concentrated on helping to develop the National Assembly. In another U.S.-supported program, the University of Maryland, in conjunction with the National University of Lesotho, conducted conflict management and resolution training for traditional leaders, local government officials and party leaders to help prepare the way for local government elections and to build an indigenous, non-governmental capacity for conflict resolution.

The United States also worked with the Government of Lesotho to strengthen law enforcement. Forty-nine Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) officers attended training courses at the regional International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana in 2003. Seven of those officers also attended the Senior Leadership Management Course in Roswell, New Mexico. The new Minister of Home Affairs, appointed in mid-2002, enthusiastically promotes reform of the LMPS and welcomes U.S. assistance in all areas of law enforcement, including immigration control and counter-terrorism. The United States provided a grant to UNICEF for that organization to help the LMPS establish designated child protection units within the police force to deal with domestic violence, trafficking, child prostitution and other crimes against children.

The United States continued its support for the Lesotho judiciary. A computer, Internet connection and subscription to the LEXIS/NEXIS service, provided by Embassy Maseru through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF), helped secure the bribery conviction of the former head of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, and were instrumental in finding a Canadian and German company guilty of paying the bribes. This remains the largest anti-corruption case ever prosecuted in Africa. The Embassy sent the Chief Judge of the Labor Court and the Registrar of the High Court to the United States on International Visitor grants to study court administration. Both returned eager to implement much-needed reforms in court management. In early 2004, the United States began an Economic Support Funds program to improve the training and support of High Court Justices and civil magistrates.

The United States actively promoted worker rights in Lesotho, and the African Growth and Opportunity Act's labor protection provisions have been an important tool in this effort. The Lesotho Government has been very willing to work with the Embassy and the International Labor Organization to ensure that the local labor code conforms to international standards, and has welcomed U.S.-sponsored training for the Ministry of Labor's inspection department. The Embassy used DHRF funds to provide training to one of the smaller unions representing security workers, a segment of the workforce often subjected to unfair working conditions. At the instigation of the Embassy, local manufacturers agreed to a union "check-off" program to allow member dues to be paid directly to the union from the employers, eliminating a major

source of tension. The employers also agreed to an embassy suggestion that they craft and sign a voluntary code of conduct for dealing with employee organizations. The Embassy was unsuccessful in its attempts to dissuade a breakaway faction from splitting the largest textile workers union. After the police used excessive force to disperse marching strikers, the Embassy intervened with the Minister of Home Affairs to press for a full investigation of the responsible officers.

The United States has continued to use DHRF to strengthen local human rights non-governmental organizations. The Media Institute of Lesotho received funds to promote ethical practices in the media and to strengthen human rights reporting. The Embassy and the UN Development Program jointly sponsor the annual Red Ribbon Award, to promote reporting on HIV/AIDS, especially to end discrimination against persons living with AIDS.

The United States also addressed the need to professionalize the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF), which had contributed to the political turmoil in Lesotho in the 1990s. Two LDF officers participated in the Africa Center for Strategic Studies Senior Seminar that examined issues of democratic governance and civil-military relations. Other LDF personnel participated in International Military Education and Training that covered, among other subjects, human rights and civil society.

An important indicator of the success of the efforts of all donors and the people of Lesotho in promoting democracy and human rights has been the substantial improvement in popular perceptions of Lesotho as a democratic entity. A recent survey sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development found that a large majority of Basotho believe they have greater political freedoms than before and there is little support for a return to authoritarian government.

## **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 ex-Government of Liberia (ex-GOL), 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 United Nations 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 Taylor's government, the state security forces (military, paramilitary, militia and police) committed numerous, serious abuses, including unlawful killings, excessive use of force, torture and other

abuses. Police officers continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention, and beat persons in custody. Prison conditions remained 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, remained a problem. Women were raped and forcibly conscripted. Many abuses were also committed by LURD and MODEL.

Under the NTGL, although many of the former practices of the police have been curtailed, some serious abuses continued. Liberians not under the protective umbrella of ECOMIL still faced abuse by elements of LURD, MODEL and former GOL troops fighting for control of territory. There were reports of arbitrary arrests and detentions, extrajudicial killings, rapes and other abuses. UNMIL is currently training and supporting an interim police force since the Liberian National Police (LNP) force has been disarmed.

Since many of the human rights abuses occurred within the security sector and justice sector, U.S. strategy successfully focused on pressing the ex-GOL to free political prisoners, and on pressing the ex-GOL, as well as LURD and MODEL, to end the war. The United States is addressing human rights issues by concentrating programs in areas such as political party development and the education of the public on human rights.

In July 2003, the Deputy Secretary of State met with Archbishop Michael K. Francis to discuss the peace process. The United States gave Economic Support Funds (ESF) to Radio Veritas, a Catholic Church-run independent radio station, to support its activities and also funded the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote reconciliation.

Through its Public Affairs Office (PAO), the Embassy supported a local NGO that specializes in human rights concerns. This NGO received a \$5,000 grant to work with the community through forum theater to address ways in which the community can rally against violence. The PAO also facilitated a grant of more than \$3,000 to show films and hold seminars related to democracy building. Finally, the PAO arranged a grant for \$30,000 to support a local radio station in the immediate aftermath of the June-August 2003 siege of Monrovia, to deliver messages supporting an end to the violence in Liberia and support for peacekeepers. The PAO also organized a media conference dealing with post-conflict freedom of the press and media issues, which supported the democratization process, and the PAO will pursue similar opportunities this year.

U.S. officials routinely highlighted publicly the need for improvements in human rights conditions. During the Taylor era, the Ambassador and other U.S. officials worked privately with Liberian officials, NGOs and other organizations to identify areas of concern and encourage systemic reforms. These efforts continued as

part of the peace implementation process, which is less about altering current practices than starting over. At least \$10 million of \$200 million that the United States allocated for relief and reconstruction in Liberia, following the departure of Taylor and the signing of the CPA, are designated for civil police and related judicial structures, with implementation of related programs to be coordinated with other donors.

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 Embassy has supported Treasury Department efforts, including multiple assessment teams, to get "economic boots on the ground" to work with the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank and other relevant ministries to encourage transparency and the fight against corruption.

Through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Embassy has been supporting the International Republican Institute with \$650,000 toward political party strengthening. Another \$400,000 in ESF funds is being distributed through Liberian and other local partners on human rights matters. A total of \$650,000 in ESF is being used for the development of up to 20 community radio stations featuring local programming as well as the distribution of more than 2,000 solar powered radios to community literacy groups' Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) programs. The radios will also broadcast programs in such areas as human rights and civic education or health and economic livelihood subjects. The BCC program also includes theater and other community-level activities geared toward social mobilization. A key program for social mobilization is in the implementation of REFLECT in more than 100 communities. REFLECT facilitates the organization of community groups in order to address community problems, as well as contributing toward adult literacy.

## **MADAGASCAR**

The Government of Madagascar generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Security forces used lethal force to disperse demonstrations. Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening. Arbitrary arrests and detentions occurred. The Government at times limited freedom of speech and assembly. Women continue to face societal discrimination.

During his May 27 meeting with Malagasy President Ravalomanana, the Secretary of State encouraged adherence to good governance and democratic reforms. For its part, the Embassy advanced key U.S. human rights goals through its participation in a monthly Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), through U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) democracy and governance activities, and with programs financed with special funds. These activities reached a broad cross-section of the population. The HRWG conducted outreach designed to improve public understanding of Madagascar's Muslim community, activities promoting disability rights and programs to facilitate outreach for government anti-corruption

initiatives. The Embassy also actively lobbied the Government to resolve expeditiously the cases of political detainees. USAID Madagascar programs supported observer training for municipal elections, upgraded infrastructure for the judiciary and promoted civic education and national reconciliation after the 2002 political crisis that resulted from the disputed presidential election. The Embassy also funded grassroots human rights initiatives through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund and provided scholarships for 1,400 individuals through the Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship (EDDI) program.

The Embassy continued to coordinate and chair the monthly Madagascar HRWG in 2003 and early 2004, and it remained a significant forum for official and civil society to discuss broad-ranging human rights issues. The standard format is a focused presentation on a single subject, followed by an opportunity for those present to introduce and discuss matters of current interest. The embassy's Public Affairs Section this year began to provide a booth or a table at each meeting offering additional information reflecting U.S. policy on the day's main topic(s).

U.S. support for Madagascar's November 2003 municipal elections and for Ministry of Justice infrastructure upgrades had wide impact. USAID provided funding to train and transport local election observers and to conduct voter education campaigns for the municipal elections. USAID aimed to make the justice system more accessible to the average Malagasy. Working with the Malagasy Ministry of Justice, the Antananarivo Magistrates' Association and Transparency International, USAID established an information booth at Antananarivo's main courthouse and equipped 20 courtrooms throughout Madagascar with sound systems. USAID also funded a reconciliation program known as "Fihavanana" from the Malagasy word for solidarity and community consensus. The \$210,000 program dealt with lingering effects of the 2002 political crisis and provided a nationwide civic education program with a strong human rights component.

The September 2003 HRWG session, devoted entirely to Madagascar's Muslim community, allowed the Embassy to broaden its activities relating to that group of approximately 750,000. The session was intended to stimulate thinking in the broader community about an important and often dismissed minority and to improve mutual understanding. Representatives of various elements of the Muslim community made presentations on their beliefs, the social context of Islam in Madagascar, and Islam's role in the country. This session allowed a group traditionally held at arm's length by the general population to demonstrate their good citizenship and desire to integrate into Malagasy society.

The Embassy also promoted key democratic values through Democracy and Human Rights Fund II (DHRF II) grants and the EDDI program. In 2003, DHRF II grants enabled Malagasy non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from across the country to organize human rights workshops, support radio broadcasts on the themes of democracy and human rights and establish a civic education information center

specifically targeting women and children. In 2003, more than 1,400 girls, a group traditionally underrepresented in formal education, received full or partial scholarships through the EDDI program. The embassy's Public Affairs Section sent several outstanding Malagasy candidates to the United States under the International Visitor program to study issues such as grassroots democracy, the U.S. judicial system and HIV/AIDS education and treatment.

Finally, the HRWG's March 2003 meeting on disability rights, a first in its eight-year history, provided insights into current NGO and government activities and offered an opportunity to highlight pioneering U.S. legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## **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 2003. 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 remained a serious problem, despite some government efforts to halt the practice. Despite government efforts to eradicate the practice, local and international reports continued 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 passed a law during the year that imposed substantial criminal penalties for trafficking in persons.

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 throughout 2003 and early 2004 raised human rights and democracy on a high level with the Government. When the Mauritanian Foreign Minister visited the United States in 2003, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman highlighted U.S. concerns regarding democracy and human rights in Mauritania. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner also raised those concerns with the Ambassador of Mauritania 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.

The United States provided computer equipment to financially strapped, independent newspapers. This equipment, which will be accessible to several independent newspapers, should increase the newspapers' efficiency and save them money.

The United States sponsored a seven-person delegation from the Washington-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) in the run-up to the November 7, 2003 Presidential elections. Although concerns about security prevented the NDI team from observing the election first-hand, NDI representatives, assisted by the Embassy, were able to participate in a useful series of meetings with government officials and members of civil society, including pro-government and opposition human rights groups. The NDI team is drafting a report with recommendations on how to promote democratic development in Mauritania that should be ready in early 2004.

A Democracy and Human Rights Fund grant allowed the United States to work closely with the free press association to sponsor a series of seminars on the role of the press in a developing democracy, election coverage and ethics in journalism. The United States sponsored the participation of the editors of two independent Mauritanian newspapers in a June 2003 International Visitor (IV) program on Investigative Journalism conducted by the State Department's Education and Cultural Affairs bureau. The United States will send two more journalists on democracy-related IV programs in March and April 2004.

In January 2004 the United States sponsored a weeklong 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. U.S. embassy personnel based in Nouakchott used the opportunity of 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.

Embassy officials 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 built on this close working relationship by conducting three seminars with local Imams on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.

Throughout the year, U.S. officials encouraged the Government to adopt and implement key international agreements on trafficking of persons. Embassy officials also emphasized the need for the Government to

make statistical evidence of its anti-trafficking activities publicly available. In July 2003, Mauritania ratified and publicly promulgated a national law against trafficking in persons. This law included, for the first time, substantial criminal penalties for those found trafficking in persons.

## **MOZAMBIQUE**

On November 19, 2003 Mozambique held its second municipal elections, which were generally free and fair and occurred without violence. FRELIMO dominated the November elections, winning 28 out of the country's 33 municipalities. Presidential elections are scheduled for 2004. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in several areas, serious problems remained. Police continued to commit numerous abuses, including unlawful killings, beatings in custody and arbitrary arrests and detentions. Prison conditions remained extremely harsh and life threatening. Despite efforts to clear long-standing case backlogs, prison overcrowding was widespread and lengthy pretrial detention was common. The courts were dominated by the executive branch, lacked adequate resources and were chronically understaffed and largely ineffectual. Corruption continued to be a problem in the public and private sectors. Domestic violence against women, as well as widespread discrimination against women in employment and property rights, remained significant problems. There were confirmed reports that women and children were trafficked to South Africa.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Mozambique strengthens key institutions, enhances civil society, addresses corruption at all levels and combats trafficking in persons. The Embassy has been actively engaged in increasing the professionalism of the police and reforming the judiciary. Embassy officials have routinely engaged religious and business leaders, domestic civil society groups and government officials on human rights concerns, including trafficking in persons, HIV/AIDS and corruption. The U.S. Labor Department is also funding a U.S.-based non-governmental organization (NGO), Project HOPE, to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS in the workplace and reduce discrimination.

In 2003, President Bush met with President Chissano on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York, in Chissano's capacity both as President of Mozambique and African Union Chair. The Embassy also sent various community members and Mozambique government officials on International Visitor programs in 2003, including in the areas of democracy, civic education and HIV/AIDS awareness.

To foster a more professional police force and reduce human rights abuses among the police, the Embassy used State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) funding for an intermittent long-term International Criminal Investigative Training Program advisor to assist Mozambique's Police Sciences Academy in management and curriculum development and to coordinate specialized training courses. INL funds are also paying for improved facilities. INL funded key police



officials and officials from the Attorney General's office to participate in courses at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Roswell, New Mexico, and the regional ILEA academy in Botswana. The embassy's Public Affairs Section utilized Speaker Program participants to hold a series of lectures on police ethics and human rights.

Recognizing that corruption is a principal impediment to Mozambique's economic development and democratic consolidation, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) used Development Assistance (DA) and Economic Support Funds (ESF) to improve the country's judicial system and more effectively address corruption. USAID has actively supported the Anti-Corruption Unit (UAC), including paying rental of UAC's office space and provision of equipment, computers and vehicles. INL funded three trips by U.S. Department of Justice Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) short-term advisors to assist the UAC in developing skills and tracking cases. Training was also conducted in Maputo involving experts from OPDAT, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Treasury Department. An indirect result of U.S. assistance and attention to corruption was the passage by the National Assembly of the long-awaited Anti-Corruption Law, which aims to fight corruption in government offices, hospitals, schools and the police. USAID also continued to use DA funds to raise public awareness about corruption and citizens' rights through assistance to a local NGO on a planned media campaign. This NGO is also working with the UAC to open reporting centers in all ten provincial capitals with toll-free hotlines for reporting corruption.

Especially relevant due to the 2003 municipal elections, U.S. efforts in promoting democracy continued to be quite strong. USAID has used DA and ESF funds to support both international and local NGOs. With the assistance of U.S. funding, an international organization provided observers, carried out a parallel vote tabulation in partnership with Mozambican NGOs and monitored the post-election process. The group found that Mozambique's second municipal elections were well conducted and peaceful, with no major problems likely to affect the results. The Embassy used both Democracy and Human Rights Funds (DHRF) and USAID funds to support seminars for civil society on civic education. Embassy officials actively participated with the UN Development Program and other diplomatic missions in the coordination of international observers for the November 19 municipal elections, and embassy staff served as observers in key municipalities during the elections. The Embassy has also actively engaged officials from smaller political parties.

The Embassy, through an inter-agency agreement with the U.S. Labor Department, is working to improve industrial relations in Mozambique. Activities have included training programs that have been furnished by the U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, covering mediation techniques as well as techniques for collaborative labor relations. In September, a four-day Train-the-Trainers Course was held with several trainers and 30 student participants from unions, management and government.

Mozambique is a country of origin for trafficked women and children, and there is growing attention among government and civil society to the problem. U.S. officials are working with NGOs and government officials to develop more effective mechanisms to address trafficking and better coordinate existing efforts. This year, several DHRF grants were awarded for activities that focus specifically on trafficking and women's issues, including training seminars for police and immigration officials.

## **NIGER**

The 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Niger identified the lack of judicial independence, poor prison conditions, limited free speech, domestic violence and discrimination against women, informal child labor, child prostitution, trafficking in persons and the continued existence of unofficial slavery or servitude as continuing human rights problems. The U.S. democracy and human rights strategies and tactics address most of these issues, using a combination of Democracy and Human Rights Funds (DHRF), Economic Support Funds (ESF), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Public Diplomacy (PD) grants, as well as support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Supporting the development of democratic systems and promoting human rights remain the primary strategic objectives of the United States in Niger. The strategies to improve democracy and human rights in Niger include: increasing the capacity of the Government of Niger, civil society and political parties to implement and monitor elections and the decentralization process; strengthening the capacity of Niger's democratic institutions to govern well and to be responsive to public needs, increasing public support for democracy; initiating studies to improve civilian and government understanding of and appreciation for human rights in the Nigerien context; supporting the development of effective human rights policies; fostering cooperation between the Government, international human rights organizations, and local human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and promoting continued good governance and transparency.

Despite the lack of a USAID mission, the Embassy manages eight U.S.-funded programs totaling approximately \$2.7 million, designed to increase public understanding of and respect for democracy and human rights. Over the past year, significant progress has been made to improve Niger's democratic environment and infrastructure, and human rights have greatly improved since democracy was re-established in 1999. However, Niger's democratic institutions remain fragile, and internal and external insecurity continue to put basic human rights at risk.

Using ESF and DHRF resources, electoral programs and the decentralization process were strengthened in Niger. Political parties were trained in election monitoring and several public outreach campaigns were implemented to improve the decentralization process. After an open debate in the national assembly and

prolonged discussions in the media, a decentralization law was drafted, distributed to the public, discussed with traditional leaders, reviewed by the constitutional court and ratified. With support from NED and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), all political parties encouraged their membership to promote women and other minority candidates in upcoming local and parliamentary elections. The United States funded rural radio programs in remote areas of the country, which increased public awareness of the political process and supported the participation of women and nomadic populations in community development initiatives.

The United States also strengthened human rights organizations in 2003 and early 2004, but the Government often was unresponsive to their views. Tamidria, ANDDH and other independent human rights organizations operate freely within the country, and their activities are given press coverage in both government and independent media. The Government and political and religious leaders strongly support persons living with HIV/AIDS and advocated a reduction in the stigma associated with the disease in the media and in the national assembly. Freedom of assembly, movement and religion are generally respected and closely monitored in Niger. Workers rights are also protected. The United States specifically supported human rights organizations in the country through DHRF capacity building grants and PD training programs. U.S. officials reinforced U.S. support to human rights and democratic systems in numerous public speeches reported in the media. Good governance and transparency were also promoted through targeted advocacy efforts and multilateral initiatives.

Niger is scheduled to hold local, parliamentary and presidential elections in 2004. Approximately \$400,000 in ESF funds are being used to assist the Government and local and international partners to implement these very important elections. The program is funding training for political party poll watchers and media campaigns to encourage the increased participation of women and ethnic minorities (nomads) in the electoral process.

Embassy contacts in the media, in the political and judicial realms, with the police, in the military and with human rights organizations were actively engaged to promote peace, democracy and respect for human rights. The capacity of local human rights organizations was strengthened through training and exchange programs funded by NED and PD, and U.S. advocacy efforts created links and communication channels between civil society and government institutions.

Using ESF resources, Africare and Helen Keller International have installed 25 solar-powered rural radio stations in three remote regions of Niger. Local communities design, plan, implement and evaluate the operation of these community radios. Developmental messages, including messages on decentralization, voter education, agriculture, environmental protection, literacy and health are broadcast locally. The radios are apolitical and are not allowed to broadcast information with political content.

Using ESF funds and in collaboration with USAID and the UN Development Program, the United States is implementing an innovative program to improve both the supply of and demand for Internet access in Niger. The private sector and local businesses have been actively involved in the implementation of this program. Women business leaders have been trained as Internet trainers, and journalists and civil society watchdog organizations have been trained in Internet use to combat corruption. The Embassy intends to encourage the development of distance learning opportunities for Niger's youth.

The Embassy, through the Defense Attach's Office and in coordination with PD and other embassy sections, financed a civil-military seminar stressing respect for human rights and the role of the military in a civil democracy. The program was well covered by local media and included the participation of top military and political leaders.

In 2002, the United States funded six activities, including a study and workshop on religious fundamentalism in Niger, a mobile legal defense clinic to improve judicial access in rural areas, the collection and publication of international human rights treaties ratified by Niger to improve people's understanding of their internationally guaranteed human rights, training to support women's participation in upcoming local elections, civic education and decentralization training in rural areas and workshops to reduce discrimination against women. In 2003, the United States funded five DHRF activities, including a national seminar on Women, Democracy and Decentralization; local elections training for rural radio journalists, anti-corruption training for national media representatives, a national school campaign to denounce violence against women and activities to promote conflict resolution in rural communities. Fiscal Year 2004 resources will fund activities to support local and national elections.

NED funded three activities in Niger, including training for women political party members (with NDI), capacity building for local NGOs (with Africare), and support for private media (with Radio Anfani). In addition, other U.S. funded programs, including the multi-year \$24 million Title II Food for Peace Program, ESF women's micro-credit programs and the West Africa Water Initiative (a Global Development Alliance), support the development of democratic systems and the protection of human rights by focusing on community capacity building, gender training, conflict prevention and management, and civic education.

Implemented by CARE and a local NGO, the Maradi Youth Program will provide job skills training and civic education for youth in an area susceptible to civil unrest provoked by religious extremists from Northern Nigeria.

The United States used \$224,000 to launch an anti-trafficking in persons program. The program will be implemented in collaboration with UNICEF and is designed to identify the magnitude of the trafficking

problem in Niger, as well as helping the Government and local NGOs prevent trafficking in persons, protect victims of human trafficking and prosecute trafficking offenders.

## **NIGERIA**

Nigeria held multiparty general elections in 2003, the second since the end of military rule in 1998. The elections were marred by fraud and irregularities. President Obasanjo was elected to another four-year term amidst allegations of electoral misconduct. The United States is a key partner for Nigeria's reformers, and has helped Nigeria reach a number of human rights milestones despite ongoing problems. Years of authoritarian misrule diminished or destroyed most national institutions, and corruption has rotted the civil service and most parastatals. Nigeria is beset by religious and ethnic divisions, all too often violent, and its government sometimes has been as much a part of the problems as of the solutions.

The Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit serious abuses. Security forces committed numerous, serious abuses including extrajudicial killings. Impunity was a problem. The judicial system often was incapable of providing criminal suspects with speedy and fair trials. Shari'a courts sentenced persons to harsh punishments including amputations and death by stoning. The Government continued placing limits on freedom of assembly and association. Some state governments placed limits on some religious rights, and some government programs discriminated between religious groups. Domestic violence and discrimination against women remained widespread. Female genital mutilation also remained widespread. Some restrictions on worker rights continued. Child abuse, child labor and child prostitution were common. Trafficking in persons for purposes of prostitution and forced labor was a problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to assist in the consolidation of democracy and improve its effectiveness and transparency, strengthen civil society participation in governance processes, work closely with the Government and civil society to improve their ability to monitor, manage and prevent human rights abuses nationwide and communal conflict in areas of known ethnic or religious tension, and reduce and eliminate trafficking in persons.

President Bush raised U.S. concerns about human rights issues and accountability with President Obasanjo during his July visit to Nigeria. Secretary Powell and Assistant Secretary Walter Kansteiner added personal demarches this year to a continuing U.S. campaign of pressing the Government to advance democracy and human rights.

The United States worked with civil society, political parties and the media in an effort to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. The United States itself played an active observer role at the political party conventions, at all levels of the elections in multiple states and at tribunals looking into allegations of

election fraud. The United States provided training to civil society, and the Ambassador and key members of his staff gave speeches in numerous fora to encourage it to play more effective roles in policy advocacy and government oversight. The United States worked with political parties to widen the participation of the general public, particularly women, in the political process. The United States also assisted government and local officials, traditional and religious and social leaders to understand the issues underlying violent conflicts in their areas, and to formulate strategies to resolve the conflicts.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) committed \$3 million to improving governance in 2003. This funding was used in part to strengthen the Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties, and train polling agents and election monitors. A National Information Center was established for civil society to transmit "real time" data from nearly 12,000 domestic monitors. USAID also funded Islamic women's groups to serve as election monitors for the first time, with more than 1,800 monitors. Aid to State Assemblies trained staff in technical and procedural matters; 56 new pieces of legislation were passed nationwide for legislative management, implementing constitutional requirements and improving core development issues such as infrastructure, social services, conflict mitigation and security. USAID-trained legislative associates (interns) were embedded in State Assemblies, and the National Assembly assumed management of its U.S.-funded computer resources center. The embassy's Public Affairs Section made two Funds for Civic Education program grants for public education in democratization and civil rights.

The United States expanded its efforts to make rule of law more effective, working with Nigerian courts to improve case management and judicial ethics, and building the investigative capacity and independence of Nigerian government agencies charged with investigating corruption and monitoring procurement. USAID committed \$1.25 million in judicial strengthening activities to improve management and dissemination of court information, codify judicial ethics and expand public access to justice through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Nigeria's second multi-purpose ADR Center in Abuja will offer civil mediation and arbitration services. The Embassy helped Chief Judges in pilot state jurisdictions create new bar/bench management committees that helped produce timely and accurate judicial reports, shorten the time between litigation, settlement and final disposition, and reduce the number of appeals based upon recording inaccuracies. Judges from three pilot jurisdictions unanimously ratified a "Code of Conduct for its Court Employees," requiring employees to be accountable for resources, protect confidential information, avoid the appearance of impropriety, refrain from using their position for personal enrichment and uphold high standards of behavior.

The United States funded several Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) projects to encourage respect for the rights of women. In the North, the Embassy worked with a local non-governmental organization (NGO) to create radio programs promoting the empowerment and education of Muslim

women. The United States also sponsored a televised docudrama aired nationwide to educate viewers about the problem of domestic violence, and continued working with a domestic NGO to educate policymakers in three states on introducing legislation for the eradication of female genital mutilation. The Public Affairs Section's International Visitor program, with input from several different sections of the Embassy, sent representatives from Nigeria's civil society, government and media to a wide range of U.S. programs, notably conflict resolution, NGO management, empowerment of women, trafficking issues and Islam in America.

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. U.S. officers 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. USAID committed \$1.044 million to support a range of conflict management and peace-building activities, including sponsoring a Christian pastor and Islamic imam from Kaduna at a peace-building course at the School of International Training in Vermont in 2003. The two leaders then trained members of the Kaduna Peace Committee, and USAID 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.

The United States has worked to help Nigeria improve the professionalism of its military, the military's respect for human rights and all Nigerians' appreciation and support for civilian rule. Congress has restricted military aid to Nigeria in response to the massacre of approximately 200 civilians in Benue State in 2001 by the Nigerian army. The United States sponsored a Defense Institute of International Legal Studies seminar for Nigerian military and civilian leaders with a focus on human rights, international law, rules of engagement and civilian control of the military. The United States continued to sponsor a high-level program at the Ministry of Defense (MOD) to teach proper civil-military relations and assist in the reorganization of the MOD.

During the election year, the United States was a staunch advocate of democratic processes and reforms inside and outside the Nigerian Government. The United States reported on numerous human rights abuses committed by security forces and helped human rights organizations and the media more effectively play their roles in democracy. The United States continued its train-the-trainers program on police reform with three 4-week programs to improve the professionalism, responsibility and performance of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Human rights, including such topics as excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings, were a major focus. The United States also managed a six-month program for 500 new NPF

recruits, which included training on human rights and law enforcement, community policing and the proper use of force.

Elsewhere in Nigeria, USAID engaged unemployed and out-of-school Muslim and Christian youth in basketball tournaments to create competition without violence, a program that gained national attention. Concerns about the implementation of new laws based on Shari'a in several Nigerian states led USAID partners to establish the Shari'a Stakeholders Consultative Group. The Group served as both a rule of law advocate and information source in the landmark Amina Lawal adultery/capital punishment case. The United States has funded various programs to help bring peace to the oil-rich Niger delta, where inter-communal violence has killed dozens and displaced thousands of Nigerians.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) provided financial backing for the International Labor Organization's International Program to Eliminate Child Labor (ILO/IPEC), specifically to build the capacity of government institutions and NGOs to deal with the problem. Funding continued to flow from DOL for the \$5 million multi-year ILO/IPEC project to eliminate the worst forms of child labor from the cocoa sector of commercial agriculture. Nigeria is one of five countries participating in the regional project. USAID committed Development Assistance to anti-trafficking programs. U.S. officials traveled to Nigeria in 2003 to help raise public awareness and meet with government officials, law enforcement and NGOs. The embassy's Public Affairs Section published magazine articles on trafficking in women and children, and held a televised discussion forum on Trafficking in Persons with officials of the Human Rights Commission, the Police Service Commission, human rights advocacy groups, the Federation of International Women Lawyers, national legislators and journalists.

Nigeria continued to receive DOL funding for a program transitioning veterans into civilian occupations. DOL continued funding under its HIV/AIDS Workplace Education project.

The United States has taken a very active role in helping Nigeria combat trafficking in persons, including a \$2.3 million commitment from the State Department. The U.S. Department of Justice provided another \$350,000 from its International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program and Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training program to train prosecutors, law enforcement and judicial officials ♦ training which also forwards U.S. rule of law and anti-corruption interests. An additional \$500,000 from Economic Support Funds supported two rehabilitation shelters for victims of trafficking.

## **RWANDA**

April 2004 marks the tenth anniversary of the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of at least 800,000 victims. In 2003 and early 2004, Rwanda's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit



serious abuses. Local Defense Forces committed unlawful killings, human rights groups reported politically motivated disappearances and security forces continued to subject opposition figures to arbitrary arrest and detention. Elections were marred by a lack of transparency and intimidation of the major opposition party. The judiciary failed to ensure due process: A Foreign Service National who was arrested in April 2002 remained in detention without trial. The Government restricted freedom of speech and the press, beat journalists and harassed non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in civic education. These abuses overshadowed the adoption of a new constitution and the first-ever multi-party elections to elect a president and a bicameral legislature, important initial steps in building a viable democracy in Rwanda.

To address these problems, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy seeks to increase the capacity of Rwandan civil society and political parties through decentralization of local government. It also aims at strengthening respect for human rights among Rwandan officials and opinion leaders as well as encouraging the development and professionalization of the country's media.

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, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Defense Attaché's Office, the Public Diplomacy Section 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, NGOs and civil society.

In September and October, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, respectively, discussed the Rwandan elections with Foreign Minister Murigande. When the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs met with the Foreign Minister in February, they also discussed democracy and human rights issues.

To strengthen democracy and rule of law, the Embassy sponsored legal experts, including a professor of constitutional law and several federal judges, to work with the Transitional National Assembly and Rwanda's Judicial Reform Commission on drafting the new constitution and outlining judicial reforms, respectively. USAID funded an American legislative advisor who helped both the Transitional National Assembly and its successor develop rules of procedure, draft legislation and provide budget training to parliamentarians; support for this project in Fiscal Year 2003 totaled nearly \$700,000.

To promote civil and political rights, the Ambassador and other U.S. officials met with members of Rwanda's Human Rights Commission, National Electoral Commission, Constitutional Commission and National Unity and Reconciliation Commission to highlight concerns about the Government of Rwanda's

law against "divisionism." Under the law, the Government recommended that the primary opposition party be banned. It detained political opponents. Members of the opposition, including a prominent parliamentarian disappeared. To foster freedom of the media, the Embassy sponsored two weeklong workshops on media issues in 2003. One workshop featured presentations to Rwandan media professionals from veteran journalists from the United States and South Africa.

During the 2003 constitutional referendum and national elections, the Embassy fielded teams of electoral observers throughout the country, to gather first-hand information on the conduct of the voting and ballot counts. The Ambassador also chaired an interagency elections task force comprised of State, USAID and Defense Attaché's Office officials, who reviewed weekly election developments and U.S. electoral support activities.

USAID grants helped international NGOs strengthen democracy in Rwanda. USAID provided \$500,000 in grants to the U.S.-based International Foundation for Election Systems and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), to field international observers for the presidential and legislative elections and conduct election assessments that were provided to Rwanda's National Electoral Commission. President Paul Kagame, of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front, was elected to a seven-year term, officially receiving 95 per cent of the vote and defeating two independent rivals. Observers questioned, however, whether elections were free and fair, and documented harassment of opposition figures. NDI organized a post-election roundtable of political parties that promoted dialogue among Rwandan political figures and helped build cooperation.

USAID also provided \$570,000 to the Academy for Educational Development (AED), aimed at capacity-building for electoral officials. The AED grant funded the installation of desktop computers and software in the electoral commission's 12 provincial offices to manage a database of nearly four million voters, and will provide election officials with preprinted voter registration cards for future elections. The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor used its Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support a women's political empowerment project which equipped women candidates in Rwanda with the skills necessary to run effective political campaigns. As a result, women comprise 49 percent of Rwanda's newly elected parliament, one of the world's highest rates of representation by women.

A USAID grant to CARE International helped civil society organizations develop a civic education manual in 2003, with related posters, pamphlets and field guides on Rwandan citizens' rights and responsibilities.

USAID provided \$250,000 in grants to Internews to produce three films on election processes, to be shown in local communities throughout the country. Government officials ultimately prohibited the showing of

two films completed prior to the elections, but did allow one film to be shown to Rwanda's new parliament, as part of its legislative training.

To strengthen Rwanda's legal institutions while promoting justice and reconciliation, the Embassy helped Rwanda's Ministry of Justice establish a state-of-the-art computer network and database, which links the Ministry and Attorney General with provincial prosecutors and courts nationwide and allows them to track court proceedings. USAID also provided nearly \$800,000 in vehicles, computers, equipment, office furniture and supplies to the Rwandan court offices administering "Gacaca," the grassroots, village-level proceedings for approximately 80,000 Rwandans still in pre-trial detention for crimes related to the genocide. The Embassy's Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) supported a \$15,000 grant to the Episcopal Church Diocese at Gahini, which works with recently released prisoners and others to promote reconciliation and strengthen "Gacaca" genocide trials.

To strengthen local government, the Embassy funded programs to promote fiscal decentralization. With U.S. assistance, district-level accountants received training in financing community development projects.

To encourage respect for the rights of women and children, the Embassy's DHRF provided a grant to FACT-Rwanda, an NGO providing training to secondary school students on addressing sexual and gender-based violence. The Embassy also awarded a DHRF grant to Club Isangano, a youth group that uses traditional song and dance to promote reconciliation throughout Rwanda. U.S. support for the Genocide Survivors' Scholarship Fund, through a \$2 million grant, allowed nearly 7,000 Rwandan children (two-thirds of whom are girls) to attend secondary school in the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 academic years.

The 2003 release of a report funded the previous year by a DHRF grant provided new information on the situation of street children in Rwanda.

In 2003, the Defense Attaché Office worked with UNICEF and the Rwandan Defense Forces to provide training on children's rights to Rwandan military officers. Such training aims at sensitization and recognizes the growing number of rebel child soldiers that are being demobilized from eastern Congo and reintegrated into Rwanda. In early 2004, the Government of Rwanda formally established a separate facility for the demobilization of child soldiers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Following the Rwandan military's formal withdrawal from the DRC in October 2002, there were no reports that the Rwandan military committed human rights abuses in the DRC. The United States also supported refugees in Rwanda, by funding the American Refugee Committee's work in two refugee camps for approximately 60,000 Congolese refugees. In September 2003, the Defense Attaché Office organized a weeklong workshop aimed at teaching Rwandan military officers how to work more effectively with the media. The Defense Attaché Office also organized a seminar on "Developing a Professional Military." The seminar,

which was taught by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies, explored such important topics as the military's role in a democracy.

The Embassy utilizes the State Department's International Visitor (IV) program to promote respect for human rights and democratic values. By sponsoring their travel to the United States, the Embassy has helped prospective Rwandan leaders from government, academia, the NGO community and the media participate in IV programs on such topics as grassroots democracy, transparency and good governance, the U.S. judicial system, the role of the media, women's leadership and conflict resolution.

Among the states in the Great Lakes region of central Africa, Rwanda is unique among its neighbors, for it is the only one not actively fighting an insurgency or civil war within its borders. All around Rwanda, conflict threatens economic and social progress. The U.S. human rights strategy in Rwanda recognizes that despite the lack of a military conflict within its borders, the people of Rwanda continue to wage an important battle ♦ a battle for democracy, human dignity and political freedom.

## **SIERRA LEONE**

The terrible catalog of egregious human rights abuses committed in Sierra Leone over the last several years was nearly all a result of the country's 11- year civil war. Following the conclusion of the war in January 2002, human rights abuses have fallen dramatically. The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in several areas. In 2003, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) allegedly committed serious human rights abuses, including killings, rapes and beatings, though on a far lesser scale than during and before the war. Members of the 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. Although conditions in some prisons improved, many detention centers were overcrowded and unsanitary. The Government at times limited freedom of speech and the press during 2003. Violence, discrimination against women and prostitution remained problems. Female genital mutilation remained widespread. Abuse of children was a problem; however, numerous children who fought as child soldiers continued to be released and participated in reintegration programs during the year. Residents of non-African descent faced institutionalized political restrictions. Forced labor continued to be a problem in rural areas. Child labor remained a problem, and there were reports of trafficking in persons.

The primary U.S. priority in Sierra Leone remains the consolidation of the peace, which was established principally due to massive intervention by the international community. Preventing a relapse into civil conflict and promoting the current improved human rights climate is the aim of all U.S. efforts in Sierra

Leone. Achievement of this objective requires the promotion of stable, democratic governance, transparency and broader participation of Sierra Leone's people.

The United States participates in the UK-led effort to remake the RSLAF and SLP into effective forces responsive to civilian authority. Three American military personnel embedded in the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) and U.S.-funded helicopter support contributed substantially to IMATT's capabilities. Exceptionally poor civil-military relations have been a chronic impediment to democratic governance in Sierra Leonean society. The Defense Attaché Office organized several conferences to promote improved civil-military relations. In 2003, two SLP officers graduated from the FBI training academy at Quantico, opportunities made possible by the Regional Security Officer.

Past human rights abuses were directly related to the state of extreme insecurity in the country. Consequently, much of the effort to address human rights abuses are directed at strengthening the ability of the Sierra Leone Government to provide for the security of its citizens. Several incidents of human rights abuses in 2003 were attributed to belligerents in the conflict in neighboring Liberia. Both sides in that conflict sent armed foraging parties into Sierra Leone to loot border communities and force Sierra Leone citizens to serve against their will as porters and possibly in other capacities. The U.S. provision of helicopter services to the RSLAF and the SLP, paid for by peacekeeping funds, has assisted in strengthening border security.

Through the provision of \$20 million over three years in Economic Support Funds (ESF), the United States is the largest financial contributor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Special Court has a mandate from the UN Security Council to put on trial those with the greatest responsibility for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in Sierra Leone since 1996. The United States also gives the Special Court strong political backing in the UN Security Council and on the UN management committee. The Ambassador and members of 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 fast ending.

The United States provided a \$800,000 Human Rights and Democracy Fund grant to the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative to document war crimes, building upon work previously undertaken in the Balkans.

Approximately \$700,000 in ESF monies was contributed to Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) through the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Embassy has closely followed the work of the TRC and the Ambassador has weighed in with key players to assure

effective management of U.S. resources in support of the TRC's mandate. The United States has conditioned an additional \$300,000 on successful completion of the TRC's work and credible progress on the establishment of a truly independent Human Rights Commission.

All elements of the Embassy make democratic practice an element of their dialogue with key contacts in civil society, including religious leaders, women, politicians in government and opposition and the media. The United States also underlines the significance of improved democratic practice to sustaining U.S. engagement in Sierra Leone. The Embassy's Public Diplomacy section became fully staffed in 2003 for the first time since 1997. The United States has focused these enhanced resources, including exchanges and visiting speakers, on issues of democratic practice with all relevant audiences. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Democracy and Human Rights Fund and other resources, the United States supports the activities of the National Democratic Institute and domestic non-governmental organizations, such as the Campaign for Good Governance, that promote human rights and democracy.

The United States funded the construction of Radio Moa, which serves Kailahun, an area in eastern Sierra Leone near the Liberian border traumatized by a decade-long rebel occupation during the war. The radio station is relevant and successful because it airs uncensored public opinion. The local community manages the station through a diverse board representing a wide range of local people and institutions. The radio station played a key role in providing accurate information after a recent disturbance involving gunfire between RSLAF soldiers that local villagers mistook for an armed incursion.

The U.S. Ambassador gave speeches in Kailahun District in 2003 and 2004 in which he drove home the importance of educating girls and making good use of donor assistance. The speeches generated extensive media coverage and comment. The substance of these speeches was later used by the President of Sierra Leone in remarks he made promoting the advancement of women in the country, urging Sierra Leoneans to place a high value on the education of women and girls.

Serious human rights abuses such as bonded and child labor continue to be problems in Sierra Leone's extensive alluvial diamond fields. Through strong intervention from USAID, the United States is addressing these and other issues in an attempt to make diamond mining a legitimate and effectively monitored economic 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. In May 2000, in Arta, Djibouti, delegates representing all clans and a wide spectrum of Somali society participated in a "Conference for National Peace and Reconciliation in Somalia." The Conference adopted a

charter for a three-year Transitional National Government and selected a 245-member Transitional National Assembly. Administrations in the northwest (Somaliland) and northeast (Puntland) did not recognize the results of the Djibouti Conference, nor did several Mogadishu-based factional leaders. Serious inter-clan and intra-clan fighting continues in parts of the country, resulting in the killing of numerous civilians.

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 U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is responsible for Somalia. During visits to Somalia, embassy officers encouraged 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 2003, the Embassy used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund for four projects in southern Somalia, two involving human rights education and training and two promoting conflict resolution at the local grassroots level.

A reconciliation process was initiated by the Government of Kenya on behalf of the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eldoret, Kenya, in October 2002. In 2003, the process, which has as its goal the establishment of governance in Somalia acceptable to all Somalis, was moved to the outskirts of Nairobi. The embassy's "Somalia Watcher" was an active observer at the talks until July 2003; embassy involvement was less intensive for the remainder of the year as the result of a staffing gap. In 2003, the United States provided \$250,000 in support of this reconciliation process, both for expenses related to conference administration and to support broadcasts of the conference proceedings in order to keep the Somali public informed on the debates and decisions being made at the conference.

Somaliland, the self-proclaimed republic in northwestern Somalia, held presidential elections in April 2003. Embassy Nairobi staff informally served as election observers. According to the announced results in the presidential contest, the incumbent, Dahir Riyale Kahin, won a very narrow victory; his principal challenger, Ahmad Muhammad Silanyo, announced that his party would peacefully protest the outcome. The United States maintains informal contacts with Somaliland authorities, as it does with a number of other Somali groups. However, it does not have an official relationship with Somaliland and, therefore, did not provide direct electoral assistance to the Somaliland authorities. The United States did provide financial assistance to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for party-building, including \$200,000 from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for political party development activities through the International Republican Institute, and U.S. officials visiting Somaliland have encouraged political leaders to develop democratic institutions.

One of USAID's strategic objectives for Somalia has been to strengthen Somali capacity for local governance and conflict mitigation. In 2003, USAID provided \$769,000 to a civil society expansion program in Somaliland and Puntland. 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.

Civil society groups are now key partners in carrying out conflict awareness and management programs. In 2003, USAID provided \$805,000 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 two local participatory research organizations, one in Somaliland and one in Puntland that are designed to be successor organizations to the project.

USAID extended by six months its three-year program with the UN Development Program to support the judiciary and the rule of law. The program seeks to help re-establish functional judicial services including the rationalization and adoption of legal codes, and the re-establishment of functional judicial and court facilities, including training, capacity building and the provision of essential equipment.

## **SUDAN**

The Government of Sudan remained under the leadership of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who took power in a military coup in 1989, and continued to operate under an extended state of emergency. The Government's human rights record remained extremely poor, and although there were improvements in some areas, numerous serious abuses continued. The Government restricts some non-Islamic religious practices and other civil liberties. The judiciary is not independent. The press is not free. Members of the national security forces operate with impunity and the number of political detentions has risen. The peace negotiation process to end the second of two 20-year civil wars since independence in 1956 continued. The United States, with its troika partners the United Kingdom and Norway, remained actively engaged.

The Government denies that fighting in the western region of Darfur has led to human rights violations and has sought to keep this conflict separate from the ongoing peace process in the south. However, an estimated 700,000 are fleeing their homes due to insecurity. Reports indicate that Arab Muslim militias are killing, looting and raping vulnerable populations. By all accounts, the victims of these human rights violations are African Muslims. In addition, the Government of Sudan is denying humanitarian access to hundreds of thousands of civilians, creating further widespread suffering. The security forces have detained a large number of people from Darfur including human rights activists working in the region. Though most have been released, a few have been charged under the crimes against the state law and remain in detention,



and some remain in detention without charges. Due to the unrest in the area, parliament voted December 29, 2003, to extend the state of emergency law for another year.

The press still suffers from suspensions, arrests and harassing lawsuits. Members of the security forces have exercised their authority separately from the president's office, unilaterally ordering newspaper closings, and they shut down al-Jazeera's Sudan office and detained the director incommunicado for seven days without charges. These actions strain President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's credibility since he announced the Government's commitment in October 2003 to lift the prohibitions on press and the media as well as to human rights in general. The Embassy actively monitors press freedom and has delivered statements to the newspapers and the Government protesting press suspensions and detentions and meets personally with those involved.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Sudan supports conflict resolution, promotes respect for fundamental human rights and combats trafficking in persons. Embassy officers stressed to government officials at all levels the importance of human rights benchmarks to improve bilateral relations and for the eventual loosening and lifting of economic sanctions, emphasizing press freedom, religious tolerance, promoting an open political process and freedom of speech, movement and assembly.

The Chargé d'Affaires, Deputy Chief of Mission, other embassy representatives and official Washington visitors maintained essential and continuous dialogue, not only with government officials, including regularly with the Foreign Minister, but also with various opposition politicians from Khartoum and political leaders from the West and East of Sudan, leaders from all sectors of Sudanese society, activists in the human rights arena and members of the media. Embassy officers also met regularly with religious leaders and encouraged the work of the Sudan inter-religious council. Senior Washington officials, including the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Special Administrator met with top government officials and influential players. The Embassy supported new initiatives for cultural and educational exchange programs in the areas of democracy, human rights and civil liberties, and responsible press. The Chargé d'Affaires and Washington visitors held numerous press conferences and interviews for local, regional and international media.

In Fiscal Year 2003, the United States allocated nearly \$163 million for humanitarian assistance including a USAID-supported internally displaced persons and child protection program. New initiatives linked to the peace process included expanding humanitarian assistance as a result of improved access to populations in the south. The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration Affairs funded refugee protection and assistance programs for children.

The United States continued to provide funding, assistance and support to the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT) (\$6 million in 2003), the Nuba Mountains Joint Monitoring Mission (\$7 million in 2003) and the Verification Monitoring Team (\$1.3 million in 2003 and 2004). 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](http://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 Government does not consider trafficking in persons to be a major problem; the Government does acknowledge that abductions have occurred in large numbers. To facilitate reintegration and family reunification of abductees, the Government recently began to provide funding to the governmental organization Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC) for that purpose. In line with the recommendations of U.S. Special Envoy Senator Danforth's International Eminent Person's Group report of May 2002, USAID funded anti-trafficking activities and generated community support for child protection initiatives that continue to expand. Using a database of approximately 15,000 abducted persons, the programs work with communities to trace, resettle and reintegrate abductees back into their home community.

## **SWAZILAND**

Swaziland is an absolute monarchy, and political parties are technically banned although some operate under government surveillance. The Government's human rights record was poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Police used excessive force on some occasions, and there were reports that police tortured and beat some suspects. Impunity was a problem. Government respect for the rule of law remained problematic and caused the entire Court of Appeals to resign in late 2002 with no further developments in 2003. A lack of administrative efficiency and capacity within the judiciary made access to justice prolonged and difficult. Legal and cultural discrimination, violence against women and abuse of children remained problems. Worker rights remained limited. There was anecdotal evidence that trafficking in persons occurred.

In light of these concerns, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy 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 officers also worked to improve public understanding of constitutional principles and democracy.

Although the constitution has been suspended since 1973, in May 2003, a Constitutional Drafting Committee released a draft of the constitution for public debate. In June, King Mswati and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner discussed the release of the draft constitution. To support this initiative, the Embassy used Economic Support Funds (ESF) to sponsor a civic education program, administered by the International Development Law Organization, which improved public understanding of the draft constitution, political participation, accountability and transparency in government and the need for political participation. Through the civic education program, which targeted civic groups, parliamentarians, judicial officials and other government representatives, the Embassy stressed the importance of participating in the 2003 national elections, which installed a parliament with some pro-democracy members.

Government respect for the rule of law did not improve in 2003, and it refused to respect court decisions that it found politically threatening. The United States used Public Diplomacy programs and the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to raise public awareness of the danger of this trend and the importance of an independent and efficient judiciary. The lack of a court of appeals and overall administrative inefficiency within the judiciary has caused the already significant backlog of unheard cases to worsen. To address this concern, the Embassy developed an ESF program that will bolster the technological capacity of all elements of the judicial system and strengthen the use of pre-trial case management to reduce the backlog and improve litigants' access to the courts. The Embassy also used the International Visitor program to expose the judiciary to the U.S. court system, thereby building an awareness of the need for transparency and accountability within the judiciary.

Women and children are traditionally disadvantaged groups. The Embassy used the DHRF to bolster respect for and improve the political awareness of women. One half of the DHRF allotment for 2003 supported a women-managed non-governmental organization (NGO) that played a critical role in running civic education programs on the rights of women under the proposed constitution. The NGO also used the grant to help women seeking election to parliament develop campaign strategies. Embassy officers also sought opportunities to speak publicly on the critical role women play in the most developed societies. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has left an increasing number of children vulnerable to child labor. As their parents become sick and die, the children lose their means of support and cannot pay school fees. To combat this trend in part, the Embassy worked to persuade the Government to take part in a U.S. Labor Department-sponsored program to reduce child labor and keep children in school. The government's agreement to join in this program is significant because it marks the first official acknowledgment of the Kingdom's growing child labor problem.

Increasing government and business community respect for internationally respected workers' rights has continued to be a critical component of the Embassy's human rights strategy. In 2003, the United States

undertook an investigation into whether the Kingdom's General System of Preferences privileges should be revoked because respect for workers' rights is lacking. Although that investigation is still pending, the Embassy worked to improve the industrial relations environment by supporting tripartite workshops that clarified union recognition procedures in the garment sector. As a result of these workshops, tripartite partners have said that labor relations within the sector have improved.

## **TANZANIA**

The United Republic of Tanzania is a multiparty state led by the President of the mainland, Benjamin Mkapa. Zanzibar, although integrated into the country's governmental and party structure, has its own President and legislature and exercises considerable autonomy. While there have been improvements with respect to human rights in recent years, the Government's overall record remains poor. Police were more disciplined during the year; however, members of the police and security forces mistreated suspected criminals. Fair and expeditious trials were problematic due to an inefficient, understaffed judiciary subject to corruption. Prison conditions remained harsh and life-threatening. Child prostitution and child labor remained problems.

The U.S. strategy aims to improve respect for human rights and to foster an environment for free and fair elections that meet international standards in 2005. The United States consistently engaged the Government on a range of human rights issues and coordinated this strategy to effect change with all U.S. agencies in Tanzania.

Following the 2001 post-election violence, the United States has focused on decreasing tension between the long-ruling CCM party and the main opposition political party on Zanzibar. In 2003, embassy officials continued to meet frequently with representatives from both parties. Embassy officials also met regularly in Zanzibar's Joint Presidential Supervisory Committee (JPSC) to voice continued U.S. support for the bipartisan "Muafaka" reconciliation accord. The accord, known by the Swahili term, mandates electoral reforms, establishment of a permanent voter registry and investigation of the post-election violence that took place in early 2001. The two major political parties negotiated this accord in the wake of massive electoral irregularities and conflict on Zanzibar following the late 2000 general elections. The JPSC continued to supervise the implementation of these provisions in 2003. Embassy officials observed the May Parliamentary by-elections on Pemba, which were a critical test for the "Muafaka," and found them to be free and fair.

The embassy's democracy assistance programs and the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) civil society strengthening program focus on long-term efforts to build the capacity of grassroots non-governmental organizations (NGOs). USAID allocated \$2 million toward a multi-year project to

strengthen the national parliament's representative, lawmaking and oversight functions. The Public Affairs Section sponsors experts and exchange programs about human rights, democracy and good governance to increase awareness of these issues.

With \$265,000 in funding from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and its International Law Enforcement Academy, the Regional Security Office provided practical training and equipment to enable police to better safeguard security while upholding universal human rights standards. Civil Disorder Management Training, which continued in 2003, gave police the skills to manage large demonstrations, protect demonstrators' rights against ill treatment and build the Government's confidence in its ability to manage demonstrations so that more rallies may be authorized rather than being banned outright. In 2003 only one rally was banned. INL has also provided approximately \$300,000 in multi-year funding for a forensic laboratory to improve police investigation skills, speed up investigations (during which the accused is often locked up) and reduce the number of wrongful arrests and convictions.

One of the embassy's most effective tools for highlighting human rights practices has been its annual observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. In addition to focusing on U.S. efforts to protect human rights at home and by extension providing a model for Tanzania, the observance includes the naming of a "Drum Major for Justice" laureate each year. The prestigious award receives widespread publicity. In 2004, Ms. Justa Mwaituka, Director of the Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization (KIWOHEDE) received the award for her anti-trafficking work with vulnerable rural young women unprepared for city life. KIWOHEDE was a recipient of a Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant to build 16 drop-in shelters for abused and trafficked girls.

In 2003 the DHRF supported women's empowerment. One 2003 DHRF project supported a local NGO's participatory drama about female genital mutilation that traveled to 54 rural villages and reached an audience of 46,807 people. Another 2003 DHRF project supported legal education and human rights awareness for Maasai women.

With an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in excess of 12 percent and growing, the rights of people affected by the disease is becoming an issue for national dialogue. USAID support helped create the Tanzanian Parliamentarians AIDS Coalition, an NGO of Members of Parliament who seek to use their positions to advocate against discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, minimize stigma, protect orphans and vulnerable groups and ensure proper accounting for the public funds designated to fight HIV/AIDS.

The Embassy has consistently engaged the Government on the issue of refugee protection for the nearly 500,000 refugees in Tanzania and urged them to continue their tradition of hosting refugees. High-level demarches were made during the year to emphasize this point.

The U.S. Labor Department continues to support a large multi-year program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Tanzania. As of December 2003, 3,895 children had been withdrawn from four targeted sectors. The Labor Department also supports a program aimed at strengthening labor relations.

The United States has been active in raising awareness about trafficking in persons and is a member of a working group that includes representatives from the Ministries of Social Development, Gender and Children, Labor and Education, and the Police Force's Criminal Investigation Division, as well as international and local NGOs. The Embassy donated two shipping containers for use as outreach centers by a local NGO working with child commercial sex workers. The Embassy also released a public service announcement in Swahili, the local language, about the danger of trafficking. A result of the increased awareness of trafficking was the first-ever arrest for trafficking of children in Tanzania.

## **TOGO**

President Eyadema, Africa's longest-ruling strongman (in power for 37 years), despite pledging earlier not to run, was declared the victor of the June 2003 election, which was marked by numerous uninvestigated charges of irregularities. The principal opposition leader, meanwhile, was disqualified on the pretext of non-residency. Opposition leaders remain divided as to how to proceed. Deep distrust between the regime and opposition prevails. Significant continuing problem areas in human rights include strong-arm methods by military and security forces, restrictions on the press, the poor status of women and trafficking in women and children. Security forces committed unlawful killings and beat civilians. Impunity was a serious problem. The Government jailed and at times abused political opponents and critics of the Government. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems. Several political arrests occurred, and prolonged pretrial detention was common. The judiciary did not ensure fair and expeditious trials. Prison conditions remained very harsh. Discrimination against ethnic minorities remained a problem. The Government limited workers' rights to collective bargaining, and child labor was a problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Togo promotes democracy and women's rights and combats trafficking in persons. The United States has cut off most bilateral assistance to Togo over the past decade, as have the European Union and international financial institutions, because of the government's success in stalling democratic reforms. Socioeconomic indicators suggest that Togo is increasingly fragile. The United States devotes such resources as are available to addressing democracy and human rights issues, HIV/AIDS and trafficking. A particular focus is urging both the regime and an increasingly

frustrated opposition and populace to seek dialogue leading to consensual change and, in particular, to avoid violent methods such as those that have led to collapse of other states in the region.

The United States issued a statement following the June 2003 presidential election noting the irregularities and urging all sides to embrace a peaceful democratic process. The United States has worked tirelessly, in its contacts with regime officials, opposition parties, civil society, international financial institutions, and other donors, to promote the need for compromise and coordination toward dialogue. In 2002, the United States used Economic Support Funds to support political-party-building activities by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), but the NDI team ceased its activities and departed in early 2003 after the Government made continuation of its work impossible. The Ambassador used his July Fourth reception to address 600 guests from across Togo's political spectrum to explain in terms relevant to Togo's political transition what "government of the people, by the people and for the people" means.

The Public Affairs Section devoted much of its effort in 2003 to the promotion of democracy. It organized three conferences in the lead-up to the June election on non-violent means for pursuing civil and human rights, and the conduct of elections, journalistic ethics and HIV/AIDS, addressing the issue of de-stigmatization. Of ten international visitors from Togo, six were sent to the United States on programs addressing democracy and good-governance issues, two were sent on HIV/AIDS programs, and two career staff members of the legislature were sent to a conference of legislative staff.

The Embassy used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to support a range of initiatives. It brought together local political party members and civil society leaders to promote democracy at the grassroots level. This funding was also used to promote freedom of the press through a workshop on the rights of journalists and a code of professional conduct, and to combat corruption through a seminar bringing government, civil society and labor unions together to focus on corruption strategies and transparency. The Embassy also printed and distributed 3,000 copies of a guide for the public on judicial rights and procedures.

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 funds are being used, for example, toward a seminar in Togo to ameliorate civil-military relations. The U.S. military's European Command has carried out projects at the village level to address HIV/AIDS and poverty in order to convey the image of a just military sensitive to human rights.

To address Togo's entrenched traditional views on women's rights and protection of children, the Embassy devoted DHRF money to a women's rights campaign directed at traditional rulers and notables in rural areas. Another campaign stressed the importance of women's literacy. Through DHRF, the Embassy

printed and distributed 5,000 copies of a comic book promoting child welfare, followed by roundtables on child-welfare issues in selected schools. The Public Affairs Section issued small grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies to promote female literacy, health and equal opportunity.

In 2003, the United States allocated \$2 million toward a five-year program to combat child trafficking, which is a serious human rights issue in Togo. CARE is the NGO in charge of implementing the program. In 2003, CARE conducted a study on child trafficking covering the entire country and developed strategies on communication and education in 60 villages to combat the practice. The United States worked with another NGO to organize awareness and training seminars for youth and families all over Togo. The embassy's Public Affairs Section sent two International Visitors to the United States on programs addressing trafficking in persons. The Ambassador participated in a film on child trafficking, produced by a key Togolese NGO. Using funds totaling \$117,000 from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the Under Secretary for Global Affairs' Trafficking in Persons Office, the Embassy purchased equipment for a new office in the national police headquarters dedicated to the fight against child trafficking.

Togo also participates in a sub-regional project of the 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**

President Yoweri Museveni was elected to a second five-year term under the current constitution in March 2001. Museveni came to power in 1986, and the constitution requires that he leave office at the end of his current term in 2006. However, Museveni's supporters are seeking to change the constitution to remove the term limit, despite assurances from Museveni's political organization during the last presidential campaign that this would be his final term. Uganda's democratization process is incomplete. Legal restrictions on political parties seriously constrain freedom of association. Parliament and the judiciary are weak relative to the powerful executive. Corruption is serious and widespread. The rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) carried out numerous gross violations of human rights, including killings, rapes, torture and abduction. There are credible reports of illegal arrests and abuse by security forces in non-official detention centers known as "safe-houses." Security forces committed unlawful killings. Torture by security forces and beating of suspects to force confessions were serious problems. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. The Government punished some security force officials who were guilty of abuses; however, impunity remained a problem. Forced labor, including by children, occurred, and child labor was common, mostly in the informal sector. There were reports of trafficking in persons. Vigilante justice remained a



problem. More positively, Uganda has a vigorous free press and a populace that does not hesitate to air its political opinions. Uganda has also created a representative system of elected local government, which is increasing its capacity to govern and deliver services effectively at the local level.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Uganda promotes democratization, respect for fundamental human rights, strong institutions, decentralization and transparency. The strategy also combats domestic violence, child labor and trafficking in persons. U.S. officials engaged President Museveni and cabinet-level officials throughout 2003. In June, President Bush and Secretary of State Powell encouraged President Museveni to accelerate democratic reforms, and the Secretary raised democratization again when he met with Museveni in November. The United States urged Uganda to prepare for a peaceful and democratic political transition under current constitutional rules. The Ambassador actively participated in the Donor Democracy and Governance Group, which identified specific steps the Government needed to take to make progress toward these goals. Utilizing public affairs programs and the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF), the Embassy also engaged Ugandans through the media and at the grassroots to promote human rights and support governmental and non-governmental human rights institutions. Development programs, primarily through the U.S. Agency for International Development's Democracy, Governance and Conflict Team, were central to the efforts. The Embassy also offered International Visitor (IV) program to political and community leaders from a broad spectrum of society, providing visitors with direct exposure to American systems and practices. Departments of Labor, Treasury and Defense programs also contributed to the Embassy's efforts to promote transparency, democracy and human rights.

U.S. officials promoted the protection of human rights by security forces and investigated alleged abuses. Embassy personnel visited prisons to inspect conditions and participated in an advocacy campaign for better treatment of detainees and prisoners. Embassy personnel also encouraged human rights groups to collect information from victims about alleged human rights abuses. The Embassy contributed to the Ugandan military's respect for human rights by sending military officers to civil-military training classes in the United States.

Embassy Kampala also addressed gross violations of human rights associated with the brutal LRA, a bizarre and cult-like group responsible for the displacement of more than one million Ugandans and the abduction of over 20,000 children. The LRA has conducted an insurgency in northern Uganda for 17 years, and has been operating from bases in southern Sudan. Embassy funds were used to help reintegrate rebels granted amnesty under a law passed in 2000. The Embassy provided funds, including \$1 million from Fiscal Year 2003 Victims of Torture funds, through a consortium of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for community peace-building and support for formerly abducted and other war-affected children and victims of torture. The United States also encouraged all sides to pursue a negotiated settlement and work out interim arrangements for improved delivery of humanitarian relief.

U.S. officials supported the strengthening of democratic institutions. Embassy funds were used to improve the capacity of parliament and parliamentary staff to carry out their representative, legislative and oversight responsibilities. Contributions to the Office of Parliamentary Professional Development enabled lawmakers to better research issues and monitor and influence pending bills. A successful course on legislative drafting made individual Members of Parliament better prepared to initiate and amend future legislation. Other successful seminars focused on parliament's role in the budget process, review of a World Bank-mandated poverty reduction strategy and prospects for media reform. The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Technical Assistance developed an anti-money laundering strategy for the Government of Uganda and helped draft legislation to deal with the problem. The legislation is now pending before parliament.

Another embassy program supported the devolution of central government authority to local levels and trained local elected officials and administrators for new responsibilities. A complementary DHRF grant funded the distribution of a reference book to help local officials and community leaders better protect human rights in their communities. This reference book was also utilized in a weeklong seminar in Mbale District.

U.S. officials worked to strengthen democratic election systems in Uganda. A 2002 survey co-sponsored by the United States showed that only 21 percent of the electorate trusted the previous Electoral Commission (EC). In response, the Embassy in 2003 began a program to strengthen the new EC's technical capacity, promote electoral reform and advocate for specific improvements in electoral administration. Another embassy program assisted a consortium of NGOs with strategic planning to monitor democratization in the lead-up to 2006 elections. The Embassy also began a modest program to strengthen political parties and promote political pluralism.

The Embassy promoted freedom of speech and the press. A DHRF grant went to the Uganda Journalist Safety Committee to train radio and print journalists on how to cover human rights and democracy issues. The Embassy's public affairs section also continued its long tradition of journalism training, with a focus on the expansion and improvement of independent rural radio.

In support of religious freedom, the Embassy used DHRF funds to sponsor a successful series of seminars promoting inter-religious harmony among Ugandans. The Ambassador and other embassy personnel spoke to Muslim groups and attended various programs. The Embassy sponsored several fora to promote interfaith dialogue, forge interfaith coalitions to support peace-building in conflict areas and allow the Muslim population to voice its opinions on issues of bilateral interest. IV grants allowed influential Muslim leaders to travel to the United States, where they shared their experiences with fellow Muslims.

The Embassy utilized two DHRF grants to promote the rights of rural women and combat high levels of domestic violence against women in Ugandan villages. One DHRF grantee in Rakai District conducted seminars to increase public awareness of the problem of domestic violence. The organization also trained HIV/AIDS counselors and local officials on how to identify cases of domestic violence and ways to intervene to protect victims. Another grantee in Kotido District sensitized local officials to the need to protect women's rights and to prevent discrimination against women in the local court system.

To promote children's rights and combat child labor and trafficking in persons, the United States funded several projects. The Elimination of Child Labor project targeted children engaged in commercial sexual activities, street work and domestic labor. Another initiative sought to remove children from the worst forms of child labor in commercial agriculture. Under its Education Initiative, the U.S. Labor Department funded a program to expand the access and quality of education in war-torn northern Uganda for children at risk of exploitation as child soldiers or sexual partners.

To promote worker's rights U.S. officials met with trade union officials as well as government officials during a controversial strike at a textile manufacturer, and demonstrated support for worker rights at trade union elections. The United States also funded a four-year regional program to strengthen labor relations in East Africa, including Uganda. The program helped facilitate cooperation between the Government, employers and labor unions to better identify and resolve worker grievances. The program also supported efforts to reform and update Uganda's employment legislation. Under another new labor program, a local NGO worked to improve employer policies on AIDS in the workplace and to reduce discrimination against employees living with HIV/AIDS.

## **ZAMBIA**

After restoring multi-party politics in 1991, the Republic of Zambia has been governed by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, the party of both President Levy Mwanawasa and his predecessor, Frederick Chiluba. 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 is being challenged in the courts. A series of subsequent parliamentary by-elections showed continuing weaknesses in Zambia's electoral system, but there were also signs of improved performance by the Electoral Commission. The government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. There are frequent reports of human rights abuses committed by Zambian law enforcement officers. Police officers committed several unlawful killings and tortured, beat and otherwise abused criminal suspects and detainees. The Government has begun to take steps to address this long-standing problem through training initiatives and, with U.S. assistance, the Police Public Complaints Authority (PPCA). Arbitrary arrests,

prolonged detention and long delays in trials were problems. The Government at times sought to restrict 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.

Since mid-2002, the Mwanawasa Government has made fighting corruption one of its top priorities. Several senior officials from the previous government, including former President Chiluba and some of Mwanawasa's own appointees, have become the subjects of independent corruption investigations. Some are currently on trial. The judiciary enjoys considerable independence, but is hampered by a lack of resources, inefficiency and corruption.

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 consists of promoting democratic governance, improving the professionalism of law enforcement agencies and ending child labor. All of the democracy and governance activities undertaken by the United States are coordinated through an inter-agency working group chaired by the Ambassador.

U.S. efforts to foster democratic, transparent and fair governance in Zambia include support for legal and institutional reform and technical assistance for the Zambian government's campaign to combat corruption. In the area of institutional reform, the main focus is the Parliamentary Reform Project initiated in 2002 by Zambia's National Assembly. Following the successful conclusion of a one-year pilot project, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) joined the National Assembly and the governments of four other nations on December 5, 2003, in committing \$1 million to support a three-year project. The goal of the Parliamentary Reform Project 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.

As a complement to U.S. support for parliamentary reform, USAID has also funded grants to civil society organizations advocating constitutional reform. The Government and reform advocates agree that Zambia must revise its constitution in order to make the Government more accountable and to protect human rights; consensus has not yet been reached, however, on the process to follow in effecting constitutional reform.

U.S. assistance for Zambia's fight against corruption began in August 2002 with a grant from USAID to the Ministry of Legal Affairs to improve the capacity of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In 2003, anti-corruption assistance expanded to include a broad program of technical assistance from the U.S. Treasury Department to help Zambian investigators and prosecutors learn how to manage cases of unprecedented complexity and scope. U.S. assistance to Zambia's Task Force on Corruption, which

coordinates the work of investigators and prosecutors in a wide range of landmark corruption cases, helps the Zambian Government and civil society establish an improved climate of accountability, the best defense against corruption.

The United States has supported training with significant human rights components for Zambian law enforcement officers and members of the military. Over 120 police officers have received training at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana through 2003. The curricula for these courses include important human rights components. The United States has sent two members of the Zambian Armed Forces to the United States for a year's training; each will receive at least 40 hours of human rights instruction. Another five individuals from the Zambian military received human rights training while attending four- to eight-week courses in the United States. In addition, U.S. Department of Defense trainers made several visits to Zambia in 2003 to improve the capacity of the Zambian Defense Force to participate in international peacekeeping operations. The courses included significant components on human rights training.

As part of an effort to improve the professional standards of Zambia's law enforcement agencies, the Embassy provided a grant in 2003 for the PPCA. The PPCA is now operational, and in late 2003 issued its first public reports on complaints of police abuses. As a result of the PPCA's work, the Government took significant disciplinary actions against the officers involved, including dismissal in some cases.

Child labor and child prostitution are the most serious trafficking-in-persons problems in Zambia. In 2003, Embassy Lusaka continued its support for several U.S. Labor Department programs aimed at combating child labor. The Labor Department funds the International Labor Organization's (ILO) implementation of the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor, which in Zambia also includes a project under the Child Labor Education Initiative. USAID support for the Zambian Government's Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Program is an important counterpart to these projects, as it helps to ensure that children who might otherwise be engaged in labor have an opportunity to go to school.

The Embassy has also supported an ILO-implemented U.S. Labor Department project to strengthen labor administration in Zambia and three other southern African countries. This project helps build the ability of the Government, workers and employers to work together to safeguard workers' rights.

The Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) was another source of support for workers' rights in Zambia in 2003. DHRF projects in Zambia include Civic Education for Workers' Rights, which organized workshops on conflict resolution, women's rights and related issues for residents of industrial areas.

## **ZIMBABWE**

Since its disputed victories in Zimbabwe's 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has disregarded human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the welfare of its citizens. The Government's human rights record remained poor, although political violence declined in 2003 compared to the previous year. The executive branch continued to aggrandize its power at the expense of the judiciary and the unicameral parliament, and stepped up efforts to hamstring a weakening independent media. The Government closed the country's only independent daily newspaper for four months and is pursuing court action to close it down permanently. Repressive laws were exercised selectively to constrain the activities of the Government's critics. Ruling party supporters continued to harass and to intimidate critics with relative impunity. Legislative activity during the year scaled back due process protections and retroactively overrode court judgments and legalized past illegal acts of the Government. The executive branch frequently ignored court orders and sought to intimidate sitting judges in politically sensitive cases. Urban and rural council and parliamentary by-elections during 2003 were marred by violence and other irregularities. The National Youth Service program was implicated in a host of human right abuses, generally associated with suppressing political opponents of the Government. The nation's highly polarized and stalemated political climate was compounded by a mutually reinforcing economic implosion that touched every sector of society.

Complicating U.S. efforts to address Zimbabwe's deteriorating political situation is the government's growing xenophobia toward the West. A liberation party that has ruled the country since independence, ZANU-PF has had difficulty sustaining its popularity in recent years. Its political insecurity is compounded by the disastrous failures of its economic policies, including the corrupt and often violent implementation of a land reform program. Central to the ruling party's political strategy is its portrayal of Zimbabwe as under siege by "neocolonial" forces intent on undoing land reform and robbing the country of its sovereignty. The Government employs the dominant state media relentlessly to paint political opponents and critics as lawless agents of a racist conspiracy headed by the United States and the United Kingdom. U.S. actions and statements are consistently distorted or fabricated to substantiate conspiracy theories and ostensibly to justify a stronger hand against regime critics. In this environment, many ruling party and government officials avoid association with U.S. officials, and embassy access to the Government of Zimbabwe is limited.

Underpinning the U.S. human rights strategy in Zimbabwe is a recognition that resolution of the nation's political crisis is a necessary precondition for addressing the country's myriad problems, including its human rights situation. Facilitating such a resolution is a central U.S. priority. It was in this vein that President Bush consulted with President Mbeki in support of steps to resolve the crisis in July 2003. In addition to ongoing U.S. consultation with the South African Government on Zimbabwe, U.S. diplomats have engaged other governments with potential influence in Zimbabwe to coordinate mutually supportive approaches.

Against this backdrop, U.S. officials routinely spotlight publicly, and when possible highlight privately, the need for the Government to improve the environment for free and fair elections and to strengthen rule of law. Politically motivated violence, flaws in the electoral process, concerns over judicial independence, limits on freedom of association and abridgement of free speech were among many themes pursued by U.S. officials on Zimbabwe. Official travel and financial restrictions were maintained against key government officials and members of the ruling party to signal official disapproval of their policies and to press for change. Statements by U.S. officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner, regularly received prominent play in the independent press, including the country's most widely circulated newspaper. Foremost among these was a June op-ed piece by Secretary Powell on the eve of the President's visit to the region and a December interview with the Ambassador by two independent newspapers in Zimbabwe. The Embassy generally assured wide dissemination among Zimbabwe's media, legal fraternity, civil society, academics, and government and party officials of human rights-related reports by the State Department, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. Prominent coverage of human rights themes at the embassy's public affairs resource centers (approximately 100,000 visited the one in Harare) and the Zimbabwe-specific programs of the Voice of America influenced opinions inside Zimbabwe and throughout the region.

To document Zimbabwe's human rights situation, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded a well-respected human rights organization that comprehensively gathered and disseminated information on cases of alleged abuses. In addition, U.S. programs assisted victims of political violence, including documentation of atrocities, and supported centers for victims of torture and political violence in urban centers throughout the country. The Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) and USAID further enhanced provision of legal services to victims of political crimes. U.S. diplomats also personally interviewed victims of political violence and maintained a visible presence at politically significant events, including party rallies and election activities. To bolster domestic election observation capabilities, the United States facilitated an independent local election observation NGO on capacity building and deployment costs. The Department sponsored three Zimbabweans for human rights-related International Visitor (IV) programs in 2003, and the embassy's resource center helped local human rights organizations access human rights material on the Internet as a means to develop their capacity and effectiveness.

To fortify the integrity of democratic pluralism in Zimbabwe, USAID provided a range of assistance to strengthen legislative committees, one of the few venues where civil political discourse between the ruling and opposition parties still occurs openly. In addition, the United States funded training for organizational and leadership development, internal and external communications, and financial management within selected democratically oriented organizations. The United States cultivated grassroots democratic capabilities by bolstering accountability mechanisms among democratically elected municipal officials and

facilitating their contact with international counterparts. To help build a foundation for active citizen participation in political life, the United States funded a number of civil society organizations, providing them with training and technical assistance to help them advocate to the parliament on issues of national significance. USAID provided \$486,000 to assist a number of grassroots organizations that work with municipal authorities. DHRF funds supported the establishment of an Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance at Africa University, and USAID/American Schools and Hospitals Abroad funded the infrastructure construction costs for the Institute. The State Department slated Zimbabweans to attend IV programs on governance-related themes .

To bolster access to balanced information, Economic Support Funds supported Voice of America broadcasts to Zimbabwe five times a week. The program featured interviews by Zimbabwean announcers with U.S. policymakers and Zimbabwean opinion makers on a range of key political, economic and cultural topics. The program is the only broadcast of its kind on both AM and short wave radio that targets Zimbabweans who have limited access to independent media. The United States also worked with other media outlets to provide Zimbabweans with alternative sources of news about their country. The United States has funded activities to fortify the capacity of Zimbabwe's strained independent press, and public diplomacy efforts have devoted particular priority to concerns about freedom of press. In addition, the United States has funded services that will allow ordinary Zimbabweans to access independent media sources via the Internet. The United States also funded capacity building and training for a public opinion institute to conduct polls and gauge public opinion on topical issues, including governance, and to hold public seminars that review findings and inform policy makers. The State Department facilitated participation by two prominent Zimbabwean journalists in a slate of activities in the United States under a Voluntary Visitor program.

In supporting religious freedom, the Embassy has collaborated closely with clerics involved in pressing for resolution of Zimbabwe's political crisis. Through public and private statements and dissemination of relevant public documents such as the Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, the United States has underscored official concern about the government's arrest and intimidation of religious figures who criticize the Government.

Advancing women's issues, DHRF funds helped the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association print a civic awareness manual to educate rural women on their voting and other civic rights, and to present the manual. DHRF funds also enabled a parliamentary women's caucus to hold workshops and build capacity among women members of parliament. The Department sponsored a Zimbabwean activist for an IV program on "Women as Political and Economic Leaders." The Embassy also sponsored a workshop on domestic violence for law enforcement officials and interested civic society representatives.



Supporting workers rights through an American trade union organization, the United States funded a \$300,000 Solidarity Center program to assist trade unions in Zimbabwe to become more accountable and responsive to their members and more effective at representing the interests of their constituents. The United States funded professional economic and legal advisors, new offices, staff travel to membership chapters in the field and training in economic literacy and organizational development. On several occasions, the Embassy advocated to the Government on behalf of the American organization representative in Harare in connection with difficulties he had in maintaining his legal residency. Finally, the State Department sponsored a visiting expert who spoke to wide Zimbabwean audiences on alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly in the context of labor relations.

The Embassy has promoted interest in and scrutiny of trafficking-related issues among civil society and NGOs generally concerned with human rights in Zimbabwe, and has expressed official concern about trafficking issues in Zimbabwe through public and private statements and dissemination of public documents such as the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report.

Restoration of an acceptable human rights regime in Zimbabwe will hinge largely on the ability of Zimbabwean players themselves to resolve their political stalemate and of the Government of Zimbabwe to subject itself to the will of the Zimbabwean people and the rule of law. The United States must foster resolution of a political crisis while sustaining crucial democratic institutions through perilous times. In the longer run, the Zimbabwean democratic institutions the United States is helping to sustain ♦ free press, independent judiciary, civil society, equitable electoral process ♦ must serve as the foundation of a healthy polity that now seems so distant.

### **East Asia and Pacific:**

For me the approach of Christmas Eve last week also marked the approach of freedom. It was the time when I finally emerged from the prisons of the Chinese Community Party, a joyous day made possible by the efforts and sacrifice of my wife, He Xintong, and my daughter, Xu Jin, by support from friends in the United States and many other countries around the world, and by the governments of the United States and other democracies. ♦

-- Xu Wenli, founder of the Democracy Movement in China, December 31, 2002

East Asia and the Pacific is a diverse region with governments ranging from bleak, totalitarian regimes to functioning democracies. Although an ever-growing number of people in the region embrace democratic values and market economics, a number of governments have not yet implemented the rule of law or transparency in governance, and continue to tightly control civil society and commit severe human rights

abuses. The United States therefore works to encourage governments across East Asia and the Pacific in the development of pluralistic and representative democracies, to support the formation of transparent and responsive legal systems, and to facilitate the development of civil society institutions essential for sustaining these democratic transitions.

The U.S. Agency for International Development provides substantial support for democracy, governance and human rights programs in an even broader range of countries in the East Asia and Pacific region. The State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) currently supports a number of programs that seek to address the systemic challenges to democracy and rule of law in China, and supports programs in Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea (which focuses on human rights abuses in North Korea).

The development of open societies in which citizens can enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms is a critical U.S. foreign policy objective in Asia. Advancing religious freedom is a key component of our efforts in the region. Among other goals, the United States believes that fostering pluralism and tolerance will counter growing religious extremism in some parts of Asia. The United States also provides support for programs that promote respect for worker rights and adherence to international core labor standards.

The Administration 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 humanitarian law. The United States focuses considerable effort on pushing for reform and accountability within the security forces of East Asian and Pacific nations. Building respect for rule of law is a key challenge in conflict-affected areas.

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, no new rounds were scheduled in 2003 with either country, primarily due to insufficient progress on key human rights concerns by both countries. The United States also works through multilateral fora to promote human rights in East Asia and the Pacific, including supporting UN mechanisms such as Special Rapporteurs and sponsoring country-specific human rights resolutions at the UN General Assembly and UN Commission on Human Rights. The United States continues to be particularly concerned about the deplorable human rights records of the North Korean and Burmese Governments and uses a variety of diplomatic tools to press for positive change in these extremely repressive countries.

#### **CRIMINAL DEFENSE REFORM IN CHINA**

Criminal defense attorneys in China face the risk of intimidation, harassment, detention and arrest. Many of the lawyers who have been targeted were guilty of nothing more than vigorously defending their client. In some cases, lawyers have been indicted and even convicted, and sentenced to prison on trumped-up charges. As a result, the percentage of lawyers specializing in criminal defense is declining. Five years ago criminal defense lawyers comprised three percent of all Chinese lawyers; now only one percent of China's lawyers are specializing in criminal defense. This is affecting defendants' access to justice. According to some estimates, the percentage of criminal defendants represented by legal counsel dropped from 40 percent in 1996 to 30 percent in 2001.

To support criminal defense attorneys in China, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) is funding a project to strengthen the role of lawyers in the criminal defense process. This project addresses the structural obstacles lawyers face, including the laws and policies that are used to prevent them from adequately representing their clients. Under the grant, defense attorneys, government officials, judges and prosecutors have participated in workshops to develop strategies to strengthen their role, including policy recommendations that will be presented to the Chinese Government.

In addition to this project, DRL is also supporting other criminal defense projects, including a training program for defense attorneys, judges and prosecutors. This training will include oral advocacy skills, developing a theory of a case, the creation and presentation of logical arguments and ethics. The goal of the training is to introduce participants to elements of adversarial trial process.

These projects are part of a broader effort begun in 2002 to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in China by DRL's Human Rights and Democracy Fund. In Fiscal Year 2004, through a specific Congressional appropriation, \$10 million will be awarded as competitive grants to non-governmental organizations to implement projects in China.

## **BURMA**

Burma continues to be ruled by a highly authoritarian military junta that reinforces its firm grip on power with a pervasive security apparatus. During 2003, the Government's extremely poor human rights record worsened and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. Citizens still do not have the right to change their government. Security forces continued to commit extrajudicial killings and rape, forcibly relocate persons, use forced labor, conscript child soldiers and have reestablished forced conscription of the civilian population into militia units. In a May 30, 2003 attack on Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy, government-affiliated agents killed as many as 70 pro-democracy activists. The military junta continues to be hostile to all forms of political opposition. After the May attack, the Government cracked down severely on the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and shuttered all 300 NLD

offices in Burma. Arrests and disappearances of political activists continue, and members of the security forces tortured, beat and otherwise abused prisoners and detainees.

U.S. human rights and democracy goals in Burma include establishing a constitutional democracy, respect for human rights ♦ including the restoration of civil and political rights, the release of all political prisoners and an end to abuses in ethnic regions ♦ and combating trafficking in persons. The United States works with like-minded countries to maintain maximum international pressure on Burma. That pressure includes strong public statements of support for the democratic opposition in Burma from U.S. officials up to the highest levels. It also includes strong economic sanctions as well as public diplomacy and democracy programs that promote democratic values, human rights and good governance.

The United States is vocal in its advocacy and support for democrats in Burma, including Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the NLD, who remains under house arrest in Rangoon. President Bush has publicly condemned the deplorable human rights situation in Burma and supported Aung San Suu Kyi and the democratic opposition on numerous occasions, including immediately after the May 30 attack. Soon after the attack, Secretary of State Powell wrote an article in the Wall Street Journal that condemned the action and called for increased international pressure to be put on the junta to change. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner testified on human rights in Burma before the Congress in June and September 2003 and in March 2004, and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly reiterated the U.S. message on Burma during his meetings with other nations in Bangkok in January 2004. 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. ♦

U.S. officials also consistently raised concerns about Burma during bilateral meetings at all levels with other nations of the region. The United States urges these nations to take a more active role in solving the problems that such a repressive government causes for regional organizations like ASEAN.

The United States works multilaterally in close cooperation with other concerned nations to press for change in Burma. Such efforts include support for the missions of UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail and UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, as well as the efforts of the International Labor Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organizations. The United States has co-sponsored annual resolutions at the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights that condemn and draw international attention to the continued systematic human rights violations in Burma. The 2003 UNGA resolution, adopted by consensus, called for an independent investigation of the May 2003 attack on the democratic opposition.

The United States, the members of the European Union and other states have in place a variety of sanctions on the Burmese junta. These sanctions are designed to put pressure on the junta to improve its human rights record and promote democracy in Burma. On July 28, the President added new sanctions to the existing tough U.S. sanctions package by issuing an Executive Order and signing the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act (BFDA). The BFDA has broad bipartisan support and was passed by both Houses of Congress by a wide margin.

U.S. sanctions now include a ban on all financial services to Burma, 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, including counternarcotics assistance to the Government, 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 opposition to all new lending or grant programs by international financial institutions. Since 1990, the United States has kept our diplomatic representation in Burma at the *Chargé d'Affaires* level.

A key aspect of U.S. advocacy for improved human rights is the 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. Due to pressure from the United States and other members of the international community, the Burmese Government has released from prison individuals arrested in direct connection with the Government's May 30 attack on the NLD. However, Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo and two of their senior NLD colleagues remain detained under house arrest.

The United States also seeks an end to the egregious human rights abuses perpetrated by the Burma Army against ethnic minority civilians in border regions. During travels 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 such U.S. and UN investigations into human rights abuses. Furthermore, the United States maintains frequent contacts with influential members of the political opposition regarding initiatives that will affect the struggle for democracy in Burma.

The United States promotes the rule of law and democracy by providing information exchange and civic education programs on human rights, democratic values and governance issues. In 2003, the United States dedicated more than \$200,000 to speaker programs, exchange programs, publications and other information outreach. In addition, the United States provided \$4 million in support of the Burmese opposition and ethnic minority groups in Fiscal Year 2003. The majority of these funds is programmed through the National Endowment for Democracy and focuses on democracy promotion and capacity-building activities for Burmese exile groups and the collection and dissemination of information on democracy and human

rights. The United States also supports journalist training, media development and several scholarship programs to prepare Burmese youth for leadership roles once political transition occurs. All U.S. humanitarian or democracy-related assistance is channeled through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and none of the funding benefits the Burmese Government either directly or indirectly.

The Burmese junta does not allow domestic human rights groups to function independently and is hostile to outside scrutiny of its human rights record. Amnesty International completed its second visit to Burma in 2003. Several groups working along Burma's borders also receive U.S. support for documenting human rights abuses inside Burma. Some of these groups provided information on serious problems with religious freedom for minority religious groups in Burma, including Rohingya Muslims and Chin, Karen, Karenni and Naga Christians. Due to the particularly harsh persecution of minority religions, in 2003, the United States designated Burma a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

The United States continued to encourage 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 obligations. Burma was designated to be a Tier III country in the U.S. report on trafficking in persons in 2003. In order to address this serious problem, the United States approved \$104,000 in FY04 funding for an NGO-operated anti-trafficking in persons program to raise awareness among Burmese vulnerable to Burma-to-Thailand trafficking, 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. The three parties that won National Assembly seats engaged in talks to form a new coalition government, but had not concluded their negotiations by the end of 2003. The former Government continued to operate in a caretaker status. Cambodia's human rights record remained poor. Although there were improvements in some areas, 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 without defense counsel and thereby effectively were 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 became more active, anti-union activity also continued. 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, was a serious problem.

U.S. officials cooperated closely with civil society, international organizations, government officials and international and local human rights non-governmental organizations (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. U.S. officials highlighted publicly the need for improvements in human rights conditions. After the high-profile murders of Om Radsady, advisor to Prince Ranariddh, Chhor Chetharith, staff member of Ta Prohm radio and prominent labor organizer Chea Vichea, the United States strongly condemned the killings. In meetings with senior Cambodian officials, Ambassador Ray pressed for an effective and professional investigation of these crimes. The Ambassador also visited Chea Vichea's widow the day after the killing and the Deputy Chief of Mission was the only diplomat to attend Chea Vichea's funeral.

During the election period, the United States called for a credible election process, responsibility for actions by political parties during the sensitive post-polling period and the peaceful formation of a new coalition government in conformance with the Cambodian Constitution. Secretary of State Powell stressed the importance of the elections meeting international standards during his June visit to the ASEAN Regional Forum in Phnom Penh. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly also raised the importance of credible elections during his meetings with senior Cambodian officials in June. The United States condemned the attacks against the Thai Embassy, businesses and individuals in January, and called for the Cambodian Government to restore order and investigate the incident. The Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission met often with senior Cambodian government leaders to express concerns about these issues.

The United States used approximately \$11 million to fund several 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) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). For the first time, Cambodians heard political party candidates publicly present their platforms, debate one another and answer questions from their constituents. Program activities included the distribution of voter guides, which delineated party positions on issues identified by voters as being of primary concern, securing the signatures of representatives from all Cambodian political parties on an Election Code of Conduct and disseminating the contents of the Code of Conduct widely on radio and television. The United States also supported the creation of 22 Community Information Centers to expand citizen access to information. Diplomatic efforts to support the spread of democracy in Cambodia included repeated calls for a peaceful, free and fair election and U.S. official visits to the National Election Committee and Constitutional Council to encourage serious consideration of complaints filed by opposition

parties. U.S. diplomatic efforts also included post-election encouragement of all three major political parties to form a new government peacefully.

The United States also supported the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) that promoted civil and political rights at public forums and created the Voice for Democracy radio program that became one of the most popular and broad-reaching sources of independent programming in Cambodia. In July, the Embassy interceded successfully with the Ministry of Interior after it ordered Beehive Radio to discontinue its rebroadcasting of Voice of America and Radio Free Asia programs. With U.S. support, the Youth Council of Cambodia organized youth forums to encourage political parties to pay greater attention to youth issues and launched get-out-the-vote campaigns, distributed electoral information and sponsored quiz show competitions on democracy.

IRI and NDI also trained more than 12,000 party agents, activists and leaders from Cambodian democratic opposition parties and conducted voter education activities, distributed Political Party Code of Conduct booklets, and broadcast public policy dialogues and roundtable discussions. The United States encouraged a more open election process by facilitating domestic and international monitoring of the National Assembly election, and supporting 20,000 domestic election observers, 15 provincial-based long-term observers, a score of short-term foreign observers, 55 embassy staff volunteer observers and five IRI and NDI pre-election assessment missions. Observers covered all registration and polling stations. These efforts helped to improve the election process over the past years, but problems remained and the elections still fell short of meeting international standards.

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. More than 380 new cases were filed during the year including unlawful arrests, extrajudicial killings and threats and intimidation, including political threats. More land disputes, anti-trafficking and labor cases were successfully argued in court. In six high-profile cases, human traffickers were convicted and sentenced to prison terms of 10 to 20 years each. Other traffickers were convicted in less well-known cases.

The Embassy encouraged the conviction of human traffickers in meetings throughout the year, including with high-level government officials. There were two cases of alleged American child exploiters during the year in which the Cambodian Government cooperated with the United States and expelled the suspects to the United States for prosecution under the PROTECT Act. This diplomatic initiative was a major priority of the Ambassador and resulted in strong cooperation from the Cambodian Government. The United States also supported the provision of effective and participatory training in counseling skills to NGO staff



working with victims of human rights abuses, violence against women, human trafficking and HIV/AIDS. The United States addressed root-level social problems by developing a pool of skilled counselors who could engage victims in critical thinking.

The United States also continued to support the core activities of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, an organization that investigates and documents the crimes against humanity committed by the former Khmer Rouge regime. In addition to these core activities, and with support from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor's Human Rights and Democracy Fund, the Center initiated a new program this year to conduct forensic analysis of mass graves and collect physical evidence on the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge. This program concluded with a new exhibition at the Tuol Sleng Museum that received much positive press and public attention. The United States continued to support international efforts to establish a credible Khmer Rouge Tribunal that will operate in accordance with international standards of justice, fairness and due process.

The United States also supported participation by women in politics and the training of women in leadership skills. NDI sponsored "Women in Politics" conferences, while the local NGO Women For Prosperity held public forums on "Women in Politics," which featured female candidates and were later broadcast on local radio stations. The Girl Guides Association 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 "Mobilized to Develop Women" program used U.S. funds to provide advocacy and legal rights training to disadvantaged women, with emphasis on women's rights and rule of law.

The United States promoted democracy education and solidarity in the Islamic community. Through funding of the Cambodian Islamic Development Community (CIDC), the United States addressed radical Islam by strengthening networks and Islamic solidarity to promote peaceful dialogue toward moderate alternatives. The CIDC developed a training manual for a human rights and democracy training program that increased awareness of human rights within the Khmer Muslim community. With U.S. support, the Cambodian Islamic Youth Association raised awareness within the Khmer Islamic communities of the need for peaceful dialogue on topics such as democracy, human rights, peace education, HIV/AIDS and conflict resolution. Both projects were funded through the Democracy Commission Small Grants program, managed through the Embassy's Public Affairs Office.

The United States used more than \$8 million to fund International Labor Organization (ILO) programs and others to protect the rights of workers through monitoring working conditions in garment factories and combating the worst forms of child labor. The American Center for International Labor Solidarity, with U.S. support, trained union leaders in union building and provided legal aid to garment union leaders and

activists. The ILO supported creation of a Cambodian Labor Arbitration Council, whose mandate was to impartially arbitrate labor disputes. Tourism unions won international attention for their bargaining and arbitration victories, while U.S. support for new public school teacher unions allowed them to use their growing numbers to win several battles against corrupt school officials. The ILO also supported monitoring and reporting of working conditions and labor rights in Cambodia's approximately 200 garment factories, the creation of labor dispute resolution mechanisms and institutions and the eradication of hazardous child labor. The NGO World Education commenced a project that increased school enrollment and attendance of children at high risk of falling into the worst forms of child labor, such as child trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation.

The United States also supported the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and others with more than \$2 million for activities to combat trafficking in persons. Through IOM and the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs, the United States supported an information campaign to combat trafficking in women and children. The project included a provincial-level multi-media information campaign, village-based activities designed to foster community networks to combat trafficking and the development of a counter-trafficking database. The IOM project on long-term recovery and reintegration assistance to trafficked women and children provided medium- to long-term care, supported families in order to increase the rate of reintegration, explored and implemented alternative care options and provided psychological support to trafficking victims and NGO workers. Through TAF, local NGOs ran shelters with training and reintegration programs for former trafficking victims and victims of rape and domestic violence.

## **CHINA**

China's authoritarian government continues to suppress political, religious and social groups, as well as individuals, that are 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. Although legal reforms continued, there was backsliding on key human rights issues, including the execution of Tibetan Lobsang Dhondup, despite assurances that his case would receive a Supreme Court review, the forced repatriation of 18 Tibetans from Nepal under Chinese pressure and detention of individuals writing on sensitive subjects on the Internet, health activists, labor protesters, defense lawyers, journalists, house church members and others seeking to take advantage of the space created by reforms. Abuses included instances of torture and mistreatment of prisoners, forced confessions, arbitrary arrest and detention, lengthy incommunicado detention and denial of due process.

The United States employs multiple strategies to promote human rights and strengthen the rule of law in China. U.S. officials routinely highlight publicly the need for improvements in human rights conditions and call for the release of prisoners of conscience. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Mission in

China also work with Chinese officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and encourage systemic reforms. The United States supports a wide range of activities designed to improve human rights conditions in China by strengthening the judicial system and furthering the rule of law, encouraging democratic political reform, promoting freedom of religion, protecting human rights, including worker rights and women's rights, improving transparency in governance and strengthening civil society.

The United States continues to place a high priority on raising human rights concerns in meetings with Chinese officials and working to securing the release of Chinese prisoners of conscience. During the year, the Ambassador and other embassy officials repeatedly raised specific human rights cases in public remarks and meetings with Chinese officials. In December 2003, President Bush raised human rights concerns with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in Washington. During Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing's visit to the United States in September 2003, Secretary of State Powell expressed our deep concern regarding the human rights situation in China. Secretary Powell also raised human rights when he met with Foreign Minister Li during the APEC ministerial meeting in October. During his trip to Beijing in late January 2004, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage urged China to move forward on dialogue with envoys of the Dalai Lama and raised other human rights concerns. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner traveled to Beijing in October 2003 to express concern regarding the human rights situation and the lack of human rights cooperation. During the year, he regularly raised human rights in meetings with Chinese officials. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific James Kelly also raised ongoing human rights concerns in high-level meetings in February and March 2004.

In 2003, political activists Xu Wenli and Fang Jue and Tibetan nun Ngawang Sandrol were released to the United States. In February 2004, Tibetan nun Phuntsog Nyidron was also released and allowed to return to her home in Lhasa, and in March 2004 political dissident Wang Youcai was released to the United States on medical parole. United States appeals also helped others gain early release from prison. A team of Chinese legal experts for the first time engaged U.S. legal experts in discussions on the cases of those still serving sentences for the now-repealed crime of counterrevolution. Follow-on talks were held in Beijing in February 2004.

The President and senior officials continue to call upon the Chinese Government to enter into dialogues with the Vatican and the Dalai Lama. Emissaries of the Dalai Lama visited Tibetan areas of China twice in the past two years, the first such visits in decades. Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's special representative to the United States, and Kelsang Gyaltzen, the Dalai Lama's special envoy to Europe, made a trip to China in May 2003 to continue discussions with Chinese officials that began in September 2002.

The United States has engaged in an ongoing Human Rights Dialogue with China. During the December 2002 session, the Government agreed to invite, without conditions, 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, but those visits have yet to take place. While U.S. officials continually engage Chinese authorities at all levels on human rights issues, the United States did not schedule a new round of dialogue in 2003, primarily because of China's failure to live up to commitments made during the 2002 session.

During the year, U.S. officials worked to strengthen the flow of information about human rights issues between the United States and like-minded governments. The United States attended the fourth *Bern Process* meeting of China's human rights dialogue partners to share information about human rights strategies and democracy, human rights and rule of law programming. The U.S. Mission in China also brought internationally recognized speakers to address Chinese audiences on topics including democracy, human rights, religious freedom, corporate social responsibility and rule of law.

The United States seeks to promote systemic improvements in China's human rights situation. Toward that goal the United States funds a multi-million dollar program to promote legal reform and encourage judicial independence, increase popular participation in government and foster the development of 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 and enable average citizens to seek protection under the law. For example, in September the United States supported a seminar attended by more than 150 Chinese judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys on problems of the criminal defense bar. Other projects promote democratic political reform by encouraging the holding of direct elections at the local level and increasing ways in which citizens can participate in government decision-making. The United States also supports a small grants program administered by the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. The Embassy awards small grants to members of China's NGO movement in support of democratic values. In 2003, the United States funded 13 projects with diverse purposes, including teaching U.S. law at a Chinese university and supporting environmental and health care advocacy NGOs. The Embassy also launched a series of programs in Beijing and Shanghai to draw attention to the environmental and social effects of specific business activities. This series included four digital videoconferences and support for an October conference on corporate social responsibility in coordination with the Beijing American Chamber of Commerce. In addition, a former U.S. federal prosecutor serves as Resident Legal Advisor at the Embassy and regularly organizes events promoting the rule of law, speaking frequently to Chinese audiences about legal reform, including issues relating to criminal procedure.

The United States has raised concern for the rights of minorities. The United States publicly and privately urged China not to use the war on terrorism as justification for cracking down on Uighurs expressing

peaceful political dissent. U.S. officials 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.

The United States has devoted significant resources and time to its engagement in discussions with Chinese officials and the UN Population Fund to eliminate coercive elements of China's birth limitation program and to encourage the practice of fully informed, voluntary consent in family planning.

The United States also promotes compliance with international labor standards. The U.S. 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. Labor Department supports technical assistance programs to advance labor rule of law and mine safety. The Partnership to Eliminate Sweatshops Program (PESP) is a State Department program designed specifically to address unacceptable working conditions in manufacturing facilities that produce for the U.S. market. The program is aimed at overseas factories and complements other U.S. efforts to bring countries into compliance with the 1998 International Labor Organization Declaration on the Fundamental Rights at Work and to assist developing countries to meet worker rights criteria set forth in U.S. trade legislation. The State Department is providing PESP funding to four non-governmental organizations to work in China. Social Accountability International (SAI) and its local partners are developing and testing an innovative model for worker-manager relations through which it will train up to 3,000 workers in three to five factories in the toy and apparel industry in China. At the project's completion, SAI hopes to have built local capacity to ensure compliance with labor standards as well as to have designed a model for worker-manager training that can be applied to additional factories in China. The China Working Group is working to promote labor rights awareness in the Chinese business community and Chinese business schools. The Toy Industry Association is working to increase local capacity to ensure compliance with labor standards in the toy industry in Guangdong Province. Finally, Business for Social Responsibility is developing advanced training materials for factory managers, compliance officers, supply chain managers and others on labor, environmental and health and safety issues as well as implementation tools suitable for use in individual factories in China.

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 over the past three years, it can do more to cooperate with foreign organizations.

## **FIJI**

Fiji is a constitutional republic with a multiracial and multicultural populace, and ethnicity remained a dominant factor in the country's politics, economy and society. Ethnic discrimination remained a serious problem, as did police abuse, restrictions on freedom of assembly and violence and discrimination against women. The current government was elected in a free and fair election in 2001; however, concerns remained about power sharing and the composition of the Cabinet.

The Embassy concentrated in 2003 and early 2004 on persuading the Government of the Republic of Fiji Islands to abide by the decision of the Supreme Court on the Constitutional multi-party cabinet case. Consistent with his promise to comply with the ruling regardless of the outcome, in August Prime Minister Qarase offered seats in his Cabinet to the opposition Fiji Labor Party, as required by power sharing provisions in the 1997 Constitution. Disagreements remain between the two main parties on how to implement the court decision specifically over the number of portfolios to be held by the opposition (the Government is offering 14 while the opposition is demanding 17). However, the political dispute is taking place within the constitutional framework and under the rule of law.

The award of a \$50,000 Human Rights and Democracy Fund grant in 2003 to the Citizen's Constitutional Forum was an important part of the Embassy's overall efforts to promote rule of law through better understanding of democratic rights under the Constitution. The grant targets rural Fijians, a key but often overlooked constituency in Fiji's conflicts, for grassroots education.

The Embassy also urged the Government and the military to resolve differences that strained relations and raised concerns of more unrest during the year. This was particularly useful at a sensitive juncture in April 2003. Three years after the coup and mutiny of 2000, Fiji has returned to constitutional democracy. In recognition of this and upon completion of an Article 98 agreement at year's end, the United States fully normalized its relationship by restoring full military bilateral assistance to Fiji.

Reports in recent years of incidents of police brutality, and more generally of susceptibility to corruption within the police force, led the Government to appoint a former senior officer in the Australian Federal Police as Police Commissioner. The U.S. strategy to address these issues includes investment in the professional development of the military, police and security forces of Fiji. To this end, the United States sent a number of Fijian military and police officers for training under Pacific Command's Title 10 engagement program and other programs. With the resumption of full bilateral military assistance, the United States will also resume International Military Education and Training programs for Fiji security forces to foster increased professionalization and a greater respect for human rights.

The U.S. Embassy has developed close contacts at every level with a broad spectrum of political leaders, trade union organizers, academics, military contacts, police, legal experts, religious figures and women's

rights advocates. A boost in support from Washington provided the Embassy with a unique opportunity to step up its engagement with human rights, labor, women's and media freedom advocates on a number of important issues. It also enabled the Embassy to strengthen its reporting and understanding of the impact of key legislation, including the Family Law Act, the Industrial Relations Act (Labor issues) and the now-dormant Media Bill, which would have restricted media freedom in Fiji.

On the public diplomacy front, the release of the State Department's 2002 Country Report on Human Rights Practices was met with larger than expected local interest and publicity. Although the report drew both praise and criticism, it provided a useful tool for eliciting feedback and establishing dialogue with different groups in Fiji. The Embassy also used the International Religious Freedom report to broaden its contact with a variety of religious leaders from the majority Methodist church to the minority Muslim community.

In March, the Embassy sent two participants from the Fiji-based organization Homes of Hope to participate in a two-week Trafficking in Persons course in Washington, D.C. Although the Embassy has not been able to document cases of forced labor and prostitution among illegal migrants, there are indications that it could become an emerging problem in Fiji.

## **INDONESIA**

The Republic of Indonesia, headed by President Megawati Soekarnoputri, made progress in 2003 in its transition from decades of repression and authoritarian rule to a more pluralistic and representative democracy. The overall human rights record, however, remained poor. Soldiers and police officers committed widespread violations, including extrajudicial 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 in Indonesia. The Ambassador and other embassy officials frequently highlighted publicly the need for protection of human rights and invested time, energy and resources into helping counter problems such as trafficking in persons, religious intolerance and threats to press freedom. President Bush traveled to Indonesia in 2003, reiterating U.S. support of Indonesia's democratization and calling for conflict resolution in Aceh and access to Aceh by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international aid workers and independent media.

Because many human rights violations in Indonesia involved the security forces, the United States focused human rights efforts on pushing for military reform and accountability, professionalizing the police and developing civil society institutions essential for sustaining the democratic transition. The United States closely monitored all trials involving active duty soldiers 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 Ad Hoc Tribunal. 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 involved a number of civilians, highlighted ways to strengthen civilian oversight of the military and promote respect for human rights. Some courses sought to improve the military justice system, while others boosted the investigative capacity of military police. U.S. officials frequently met Indonesian military officials and encouraged military reform.

The United States took steps to help professionalize the national police force, aiming not only at improving police conduct, but helping the police combat human rights abusers, including people traffickers and terrorists. A program on Civil Disorder Management proved particularly successful. In Surabaya, where excessive force by police had reached alarming proportions, the number of persons shot by police plummeted during the year. The chief of police credited the United States with calling his attention to the issue.

As part of outreach efforts to the Muslim community, U.S. officials made dozens of visits to Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and day schools (madrasahs), openly exchanging viewpoints on pluralism, tolerance and respect for human rights. The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor sent the leaders of approximately 40 pesantren to the United States for a three-week program on religious pluralism, civic education and educational development, and funded the visit of a noted American scholar to the cities of Yogyakarta, Mataram and Makassar, where he held seminars on religious tolerance. The United States also provided funding to organizations working with pesantren, including a consortium promoting voter education. At the university level, a multi-year grant helped implement a civic education program throughout the Muhammadiyah university system. A separate grant helped the Institute for Islam and Social Studies in Yogyakarta conduct training on human rights and courses promoting tolerance. 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 as a means to countering extremism.

To strengthen rule of law in Indonesia, the United States supported legal reform activities. U.S. funding of two Indonesian NGOs helped provide technical assistance so that the Supreme Court could publish a six-volume blueprint for reform of the top court and the national court system it begins overseeing in April 2004. The United States also helped Indonesia Corruption Watch address judicial corruption by monitoring court sessions.



In advance of the 2004 nationwide legislative elections, which will be followed by the first-ever direct presidential election, the United States provided extensive and crucial election assistance, including technical support to national and regional electoral authorities, help with voter education programs and monitoring initiatives to protect ballot integrity. This assistance will bolster the election process in what will be one of the world's most complex elections: 585,000 polling stations for more than 147 million voters, who speak more than 250 languages and dialects.

In Aceh, the United States was the chief financial supporter of the Henri Dunant Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, which helped to broker the ceasefire agreement (COHA) between the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement during the first four months of 2003. This support helped bring about a substantial reduction in human rights violations while the ceasefire remained in effect. After the COHA collapsed and the Government declared martial law, U.S. officials, including Deputy Assistant of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Elizabeth Dugan, frequently urged the Government to protect noncombatants' rights and allow access to humanitarian groups and journalists. The United States supported civil society organizations that assisted human rights victims and advocated peaceful resolution of the conflict, and helped fund the International Catholic Migration Committee's treatment of torture victims. Although the U.S. Agency for International Development was blocked from administering humanitarian aid in Aceh after the declaration of martial law, the Mission continued to support local NGOs and media groups attempting to monitor the humanitarian situation in Aceh.

In Papua, where separatist sentiment ran high and human rights violations continued, 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, and received commitments from Indonesian authorities to work with the Federal Bureau of Investigation to resolve this case. The United States also conveyed concerns over severe rights abuses in the Central Highlands following an April raid on a government arsenal; the National Human Rights Commission subsequently opened an official investigation into the Highlands case. Thanks to advocacy work by U.S.-funded NGOs, the Commission also launched a probe into the 2001 Wasior incident, during which 12 civilians were killed. The United States also backed efforts to enshrine Adat (traditional) rights into law, to increase basic awareness of rights among Papua's most isolated communities and support the work of the Papua branch of the Committee for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence.

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 Ambassador demonstrated U.S. commitment to press freedom by meeting assaulted journalists and speaking out when courts failed to defend press freedom. By supporting the South East Asian Press Alliance, the United States monitored the extent of violence and intimidation against journalists in Indonesia. The United States also

sponsored the translation and publication of a book on press professionalism, whose author conducted media workshops on free and ethical media. In support of freedom of speech, 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."

To safeguard women's rights, the United States worked with local partners, such as the Foundation for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Foundation to Assist in the Protection of Women, to raise awareness of domestic violence, support a media campaign to inform women of their rights, empower women through pesantren programs, create a national database of potential women candidates for political parties and study how police treat female trafficking victims. The United States placed a number of women-related documentaries and news clips on local television. Dozens of women took part in International Visitor, Voluntary Visitor, Fulbright Summer Institute and other programs, many of which focused on human rights issues. U.S. support of the National Commission on Violence against Women resulted in the Indonesian Government's decision to establish regional women's crisis centers. The United States also funded the Women's Journal Foundation, which produced a monthly magazine and a weekly radio show that reached 158 stations.

In Maluku and North Maluku, violence between Muslims and Christians subsided in 2003, while in Central Sulawesi, following a decline in violence throughout most of the year, an upsurge in violence was observed in October and November. All three provinces continued to need extensive reconciliation and reconstruction work. In Central Sulawesi, U.S. funding helped the NGO CARE with community development projects and built homes for those displaced by the conflict. In the same province and in Maluku, our funding helped the NGO Mercy Corps provide income generation projects to aid those rendered jobless by the conflict. 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. U.S. officials regularly met religious leaders to urge mutual respect and cooperation, while at the same time calling for justice for those who perpetrated severe human rights abuses in the past.

The United States worked with the International Labor Organization and the Solidarity Center (ACILS) to raise awareness and combat the problem of child labor. The United States devoted substantial funding to protect children from sexual exploitation, trafficking and hazardous 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. Our funding provided for a "Safe House" where children could receive counseling and education.

Trafficking in persons remained a serious problem. Sub-grants to approximately 30 NGOs permitted them to carry out local anti-trafficking efforts with an emphasis on prevention and rehabilitation. In July, the U.S. Embassy, ACILS and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) organized Indonesia's first national anti-trafficking conference, with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment as co-sponsor. Earlier in the year, ACILS and ICMC provided technical assistance to the Ministry to develop and implement a national anti-trafficking action plan and draft an anti-trafficking bill.

## **KOREA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF**

The United States continues to be seriously concerned about North Korea's abysmal human rights record and the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by the North Korean people. The Government's human rights record remained extremely poor, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. The United States is working to raise awareness of the severity of North Korea's human rights abuses and humanitarian issues before the international community and American audiences, as well as to raise these concerns directly with the North Korean regime. The United States provides funding to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reporting on human rights conditions in North Korea and is also a primary contributor of food aid. The United States is also working to end the forced repatriation of North Koreans from China, as these returnees may face serious abuses, including torture and sometimes execution.

During multilateral talks with the North Korean Government in April 2003, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly made clear that an improvement in relations with the United States depends on progress by North Korea in a number of areas, including respecting human rights. During the year, President Bush, Secretary of State Powell and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner also focused international attention on the deplorable human rights conditions inside North Korea. The United States also regularly raises concerns about North Korea in multilateral fora and bilaterally with other governments. The United States regularly consults with other countries about the human rights situation in North Korea and ways to improve it. The United States has also supported Japanese efforts to resolve concerns about North Korea's admitted abduction of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s.

The United States continues to be a major provider of food aid to North Korea based on humanitarian considerations and provided 100,000 metric tons of food aid in response to the World Food Program's (WFP) appeal in 2003. U.S. food aid contributions are based on demonstrated need in North Korea, competing needs elsewhere in the world, and donors' ability to have access to all vulnerable groups and monitor distribution. The United States continues to be seriously concerned by North Korean restrictions that undermine the ability of the humanitarian community to assess the needs of all vulnerable groups in the country and to monitor the distribution of aid. The Government does not permit WFP officials and other aid

workers to visit or distribute assistance in 43 of the 206 counties in the country, prohibits random monitoring visits and does not allow direct interviews with beneficiaries. These restrictions undermine the confidence of many donors that the aid consistently reaches its intended recipients. In an effort to improve the conditions under which food aid is distributed in North Korea, U.S. officials have raised with North Korean officials the Government's serious abuses of humanitarian principles relating to monitoring and access principles that are upheld by all other aid recipients and have also urged other donors to raise these issues. While the WFP has reported some modest progress in these areas recently in North Korea, much more is needed and the United States will continue to press for improvements.

The United States continues to support the monitoring and reporting of human rights conditions in North Korea through National Endowment for Democracy (NED) grants to South Korean NGOs. In 2003, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor awarded a \$250,000 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. Given the extremely closed nature of the North Korean regimes, these activities are critical to shining the spotlight on the severe human rights abuses occurring in North Korea. Radio Free Asia also regularly broadcasts in the Korean language.

The involuntary return of North Koreans from China to North Korea is a matter of deep concern, as these returnees may face serious abuses, including torture and sometimes execution. The United States consistently urges China to adhere to its international obligations as a signatory to the 1967 Protocol on Refugees and allow the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to assess the needs and status of this vulnerable population. U.S. officials have, on multiple occasions, expressed to the Chinese Government strong objections to the refoulement of North Koreans in China, 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 has also discussed its concerns regarding North Koreans in China with the UNHCR and other governments. North Korea is also subject to sanctions for its neglect of the problem of trafficking in woman and girls.

Genuine religious freedom does not exist in North Korea, and there have been reports of religious believers being subjected to harassment, imprisonment and torture. In 2003, Secretary of State Powell again designated North Korea a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for its particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

During the year, the United States, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea and North Korea initiated "Six-Party Talks, the goal of which is to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear programs. During the Six-Party Talks, North Korea's abysmal human rights record was among the range of concerns raised. The United States also successfully worked with other concerned

nations to achieve passage of a resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea during the 59th session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. The resolution strongly condemned the North Korean Government for its human rights abuses, including the use of torture and forced labor, as well as restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The resolution called on the Government to fulfill its obligations under human rights instruments to which it is a party, invite UN special representatives to visit North Korea, and ensure that humanitarian organizations have free access to the country.

## LAOS

The Lao Government's human rights record remained poor in 2003 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 and tortured, and prison conditions generally were extremely harsh and life threatening. Police used arbitrary arrest, detention and surveillance. Lengthy pretrial detention and incommunicado detention were problems. The people of Laos lacked basic freedoms, including freedom of speech and expression. The Government controlled the domestic media, although many Lao have access to international media, and Internet access is generally not restricted. The only political party – the Lao People's Revolutionary Party – holds a tight monopoly on all political, economic and social decision making. High-ranking officials, nearly without exception, are members of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. Several political prisoners remain in jail serving long sentences, and the judiciary is under government influence. The Lao Government has taken some steps to address local-level persecution of religious minorities, but a climate of intolerance still exists in some areas. A long-running domestic insurgency problem has resurfaced, and the United States continues to press for a peaceful resolution.

The United States has made promoting respect for human rights a cornerstone of its policy in Laos. The United States monitors and reports on the human rights situation and frequently urges the Lao Government to adhere to international standards for the protection of human rights. Ambassador Douglas Hartwick summarized our policy in annual policy speeches in January 2003 and 2004. He emphasized that overall progress on human rights, including better treatment for political prisoners, greater religious tolerance and improving the treatment of ethnic minorities, were key to Laos' development. With some success in 2003, the United States concentrated major efforts on addressing all of these areas. While overall the situation remains poor, some improvements in religious freedom and the treatment of minorities have been seen.

Laos' prisons fall far short of international standards, and reports of mistreatment and abuse of prisoners are commonplace. The Embassy prodded the Lao Government to permit international monitors access to jails. U.S. officials met frequently with representatives from international organizations and officials from other

concerned nations to discuss strategies to convince the Lao Government to open its prison system to international monitoring. The United States closely followed the cases of known political prisoners, raising their plight with high-level official contacts and urging their early release. The Embassy raised several cases of alleged disappearances and extrajudicial killings with senior Lao leaders.

Promoting good governance was another focus of the U.S. human rights strategy. The United States worked closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in this area, including the International Republican Institute, which has a track record for conducting successful good governance-related projects in Laos. The Embassy awarded four small democracy grants to Lao-based organizations to conduct workshops and training dedicated to developing democratic institutions and free enterprise. Among recipients of these grants were the Young Lao Radio and TV Producers, the Youth Leadership Development and Community Service and the Youth Creative Writing/Storytelling and Drama groups.

The Embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS) played an active role in promoting good governance. PAS conducted a training program for Lao journalists to learn how to do research on the Internet. PAS also held a one-week training course for TV producers, which covered all aspects of preparing TV news programs. The Embassy also made good use of its International Visitor program to promote human rights by sponsoring four Lao governors to visit the United States in 2003 to see local government and democracy in action. While in Washington, the governors met with Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner who spoke with them about the importance of democracy and human rights and urged them to hold local officials accountable for abuses that occur in their provinces.

In line with our focus on promoting democracy, good governance and improved human rights, the United States continues to support granting Normal Trade Relations (NTR) status to Laos and putting into effect the bilateral trade agreement negotiated in 1997 and signed in September 2003. Extending NTR to Laos will provide an important opportunity to increase openness and transparency in Lao society that allows for the expansion of efforts to promote improved human rights and foster democratic reform.

Encouraging a peaceful resolution to a long-running insurgency issue in Laos was another U.S. human rights priority. The United States remains concerned about small groups of people living in dire conditions in remote areas of Laos. The Ambassador met with dozens of senior officials, including members of the Politburo and provincial governors, to discuss this problem and to press the Lao Government for a humanitarian and peaceful resolution. The Ambassador also engaged other foreign embassies to press the Lao Government for a peaceful solution. By early 2004, the Embassy noted indications that the Government was quietly making a greater effort to promote an amnesty program for those groups willing to give up arms and resettle, although still without the assistance and oversight of the international community. In February 2004, the United States received reports that hundreds of individuals, some of

whose families had remained in remote highland areas since the Indochina conflict, had emerged to accept resettlement. The United States is following this situation closely and has sought additional information from the Lao Government.

On February 26, 2004, senior U.S. officials from the Departments of State and Justice hosted a meeting with representatives from the Hmong and Lao community in the United States to discuss U.S. policy toward Laos. Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Matthew Daley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration Kelly Ryan, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Elizabeth Dugan clarified the importance of human rights to the bilateral relationship. These officials outlined clearly U.S. policy and sought support from the Lao community for U.S. efforts to promote human rights, democracy and religious freedom in Laos, resettle Hmong refugees from Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand and resolve the insurgency issue peacefully.

During 2003, the Ambassador and other embassy officers traveled to areas of unrest to gather information about the extent of Laos's insurgency problem. U.S. officials learned first-hand from former insurgents and their families about the Lao Government's little-known amnesty program for groups agreeing to come out of the forest and lay down their weapons in exchange for resettlement assistance. During these travels, and from conversations with family members in the United States, the Embassy gathered information about specific cases of government mistreatment of ethnic Hmong, including former insurgents, and brought these cases to the attention of Lao government offices.

Following the arrest of two western journalists and their U.S. citizen translator in June 2003 after a local militia guardsman was killed, the Embassy made almost daily approaches to the Lao Government to seek a quick and just resolution of the case. In large part as a result of these interventions, the Lao Government quickly expelled the three foreigners after a trial that did not meet international standards of justice.

The United States maintained its ongoing dialogue with the Lao Government to promote religious tolerance. At the embassy's invitation, in February 2003 and again in February 2004, Ambassador Robert Seiple of the Institute for Global Engagement visited Laos. In 2003, Ambassador Seiple traveled to church communities in Savannakhet Province, a visit that eventually led to the resolution of a long-standing confrontation between local Christians and officials. In October, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford traveled to Laos and visited church communities in northern Vientiane Province. His conversations with provincial and district officials led to improvements in conditions for local Christian churches. The Embassy also used the visit of a delegation from the Jubilee Campaign, led by U.S. Representative Joseph Pitts, to press the Lao on improving religious tolerance.

By strengthening its working ties with the Lao Front for National Construction, the Lao government body overseeing religious issues, the Embassy was able to bring cases of religious persecution to the Government's attention almost as soon as they occurred. Beyond this official line of communication, the Ambassador directly contacted provincial governors to resolve egregious religious freedom violations. This direct intervention at times proved critical. For example, the Ambassador's letters and phone calls to governors helped secure the release of religious detainees in Savannakhet and Attapeu Provinces in 2003.

Combating human trafficking was another key component of the U.S. human rights strategy. The United States provided more than \$250,000 in 2003 for anti-trafficking activities carried out by NGOs. These projects focused on public education and alternative vocational education for those most vulnerable to trafficking. Money for these projects, administered by the NGO Consortium and Village Focus, came from the East Asia and Pacific Affairs Bureau and the Trafficking in Persons Office in the State Department and from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

## **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 certain human rights abuses, including detention of persons without charge or trial, limits on the impartiality and independence of the judiciary and restrictions on freedom of the press, association, assembly and religion. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, government action, constitutional amendments, legislation and other factors undermined judicial independence and strengthened executive influence over the judiciary. Members of the Royal Malaysian Police committed human rights abuses.

As an advanced developing country, Malaysia does not receive direct bilateral economic and developmental assistance, but the United States conducts a range of human rights-related programs and activities aimed at encouraging the development of civil society institutions responsive to human rights. Areas where the United States is pressing for reform include government control over the press, independence of the judiciary from executive pressure, police awareness of human rights and trafficking in persons.

In addition to working with government counterparts, the United States maintains active communications with political opposition parties, human rights NGOs and civil society representatives. In 2003, the United States sponsored a number of seminars and workshops intended to promote greater awareness of human



rights issues. These included a workshop on fact-finding methods in human rights violations cases, a seminar on constitutional issues, race relations and human rights, a seminar on building violence-free communities and a ♦Project Citizen♦ program to engage high school students on analyzing and working through social issues in multi-ethnic, mixed gender groups. The Embassy also sent two prominent human rights lawyers to the United States to participate in a human rights program exploring the history and development of human rights and liberties in America as the basis of democratic institutions.

In addressing concerns about the independence of Malaysia♦s judiciary, the State Department has provided funding to assist the Malaysian Attorney General and the Malaysian Bar Council with judicial reform. Current projects under this program include Alternative Dispute Resolution and Case Management in Courts. The United States also continues to raise with the Government its concerns regarding the politically motivated conviction and imprisonment of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. In 2003, 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. The United States also maintains regular contact with Datin Seri Wan Azizah, Anwar♦s wife and president of the opposition National Justice Party.

In support of press freedom, the United States sponsored visits to America for several key journalists, who returned with an increased awareness of the challenges and benefits of media free from government control. When human rights defender Irene Fernandez was convicted in October for publishing a 1995 memorandum condemning the Government for its inhumane treatment of migrant workers in detention centers, embassy officials attended the trial to demonstrate concern about this suppression of freedom of expression.

Focusing on the role of religions and the shared challenges faced in pluralistic, multi-religious societies, the United States sponsored a conference on religious diversity in America and Asia and funded a seminar examining an Islamic perspective on the challenges to women in the 21st century, in which both conservative and liberal Muslims presented papers on the impact of Shari♦a law on justice for women. This seminar attracted more than 200 participants.

To underscore U.S. concern about the treatment of illegal migrants and asylum seekers, embassy officers met with Malaysian government officials, representatives of the Human Rights Commission, international organizations such as the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work on migrant issues. In August, the Embassy officially protested the treatment of Acehnese asylum seekers who were arrested outside UNHCR headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and the deportation of Acehnese back to Indonesia, including those determined by UNHCR to be Persons of Concern. In response to expressions of concern from the United States and the international community,

the Government delayed deportation of many of these asylum seekers to allow the UNHCR time to consider their applications.

The United States actively continues to engage the Government of Malaysia, political parties and NGOs to raise awareness and press for concrete steps to combat trafficking in persons. U.S. efforts focus on passage of specific anti-trafficking legislation, improving the enforcement of existing legislation, and procedures to protect and treat victims as trafficked persons rather than as illegal migrants. The United States has sent several Malaysian government officials and Bar Council members to the United States for programs focused on anti-trafficking activities. In 2003, members of the Attorney General's office attended a U.S.-sponsored senior criminal justice executive course in Bangkok on trafficking in persons and illegal migration. In early 2004, members of the Malaysian police will attend a U.S.-sponsored conference intended to strengthen law enforcement operations to combat the trafficking of people in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. As a result of these activities, the Malaysian Government is increasingly sensitive to trafficking issues.

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

Papua New Guinea has a federal parliamentary system. 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. Members of the constabulary committed a number of serious human rights abuses. Good governance and economic growth are essential elements to improvement of the human rights climate in Papua New Guinea. A pervasive lack of law and order, continuing poor economic growth causing low national incomes and living standards, severely deteriorated infrastructure and the lack of effective government services delivery in much of the country are all barriers to progress on human rights.

In the 1990s, the United States ended most of its programs in Papua New Guinea (including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps, then-USIS and the resident Defense Attaché), making the Embassy a small one with very limited resources with which to promote change. However, in our contacts with senior government officials, the United States advocates high standards for democratic processes and consistent respect for human rights.

In 2003 and early 2004, the United States provided training emphasizing respect for human rights to defense and other security personnel through the International Military Education and Training program. The Embassy has also utilized slots in Multi-Regional International Visitor programs to provide exposure to U.S. systems and values to future leaders, including a journalist who now heads up the Bougainville

office of the leading daily newspaper. The State Department funded the construction of a shelter for abused women in Port Moresby (Haus Ruth, operated by the City Mission).

Our counterterrorism efforts in Papua New Guinea and the region also emphasize the human rights element in this worldwide effort. In addition, the United States supports the implementation of the 2004 expanded assistance effort in Papua New Guinea by Australia, which focuses on better law enforcement, strengthened court and trial operations and improved practices in the Finance, Internal Revenue (including Customs) and Justice Ministries. A return to a higher standard of law and order, reduced corruption and better governance will set the stage for gains in economic and social development, goals that dovetail very well with global U.S. interests and objectives.

## **PHILIPPINES**

The Philippines is a vibrant, freewheeling democracy with an elected president, an elected bicameral legislature, and a fractious but functioning multiparty system. The Government generally respected the human rights of citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Elements of the security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture and arbitrary arrest and detention, and there were reports of physical abuse of suspects and detainees. Other problems included widespread corruption in the judicial system and police forces.

Embassy outreach efforts 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.

To encourage respect for human rights among members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement agencies, the Embassy sent approximately 150 officers 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 Embassy's International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program provided the Embassy a temporary Police attaché to conduct a series of classes for Philippine police officers with rule of law and ethics components; the Mission's Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, which also sends Philippine law enforcement officials to the United States for training, has a rule of law component as well. The Legal Attaché, a new 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.

The Embassy also works to strengthen the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR), an independent agency tasked to monitor and investigate alleged human rights abuses. A \$161,000 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor program administered through The Asia Foundation provides CHR regional offices with computer software and other equipment to more efficiently track cases and relay information to Manila. The same software also was made 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.

Strengthening democracy is an essential Mission goal. Numerous programs at both the local and national level promote equity, transparency and popular participation — all key to democracy. For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Economic and Technical Assistance 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 support to a series of training seminars and help in the campaign to encourage people to report incidences of corruption. At the local level, USAID assisted more than three dozen municipalities to develop and implement good governance and anti-corruption programs.

The USAID-funded Transparent and Accountable Governance program, 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. A recently completed project enabled the Philippine Department of Education to significantly reduce corruption in the delivery of textbooks to students. Another example of the program's work includes assistance to a southern Philippines city to establish a one-stop shop where businesses can meet all the requirements for renewing permits. In addition to curbing corruption, the reforms helped to cut by a factor of seven the amount of time it takes to renew business permits, helping to attract more businesses to locate in the city.

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 enabled 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 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 assist local farmers increase their productivity and efficiency. JUSMAG also sent mobile medical units to provide free health care for more than 25,000 citizens throughout 2003. Other components of this program included the donation of medical equipment to local hospitals and the construction of wells to provide residents with access to safe drinking water.

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 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 prejudice by the predominant Christian majority. Embassy officials met with representatives of all major Philippine faiths to learn about their concerns on a variety of issues. For example, in April the Embassy hosted a meeting of political and opinion leaders from the Filipino Muslim community to discuss the past, present and future U.S. role in Mindanao, site of frequent armed conflict between government security forces and Muslim insurgents. The United States continues to actively support the Government's peace process with the insurgents. These talks have the potential to contribute to peace and a better climate for interfaith cooperation. In November, embassy officers traveled to Davao City to host a conference of Muslim ulama (religious scholars) and discuss the role of education in promoting religious understanding. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section sponsored numerous public conferences and gatherings throughout the year across the country, to promote interfaith dialogue among Filipinos.

In 2003, the Embassy sent both Muslim and Catholic leaders on International Visitor 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 Visitor Alumni Association, one of the world's largest with approximately 300 members, recently established its own working group focusing on peace and Muslim-Christian relations.

To strengthen worker rights, the State Department funds a sweatshop initiative to help ensure that the garment and manufacturing industries meet core labor standards. A \$5 million program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor has helped economically disadvantaged families across the archipelago return their children to school. This program complements two others centered on children: a \$5 million education initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), in coordination with World Vision and the Philippines Department of Education, and a DOL-International Labor Organization project to prevent the use of children in armed conflict.

Trafficking in persons 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 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 East Asia and Pacific Bureau funds halfway houses in the Manila and Davao ports to assist victims of trafficking. 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 2003, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provided training to more than 1,200 individuals from the PNP, the National Bureau of Investigation and various airport and airline security teams to help them detect trafficking activities and patterns. DHS is developing an identification system at Manila's airport that will help Philippine officials track and identify criminals, including traffickers. Other projects slated for 2004 include funding for two local NGOs to raise grassroots awareness of trafficking through community seminars and the production of pamphlets and child-friendly readers.

## **SOLOMON ISLANDS**

The period following the commencement in 1998 of armed conflict between Malaitan and Guadalcanalese militants to mid-2003 was marked by a serious deterioration in the human rights situation in the Solomon Islands. In late July, the Regional Assistance Mission for Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a multinational police-centered force organized by Australia, arrived in the country at the invitation of the Government and began to assist the Government in restoring law and order and rebuilding the country's institutions. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, prior to RAMSI's arrival, the 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 rogue special constables. The crimes included murder, rape, unlawful detention and interrogation, assault, destruction and theft of property, extortion and others.

Efforts since 2000 by the Solomon Islands Government to halt the slide to civil chaos and lawlessness were largely unsuccessful. The effectiveness and integrity of the police broke down, and the operations and efficacy of many government bodies became minimal. During this period 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 United Nations to develop a plan to restore law and order as well as the primacy of respect for human rights.

Regional concern about the deteriorating situation resulted in the offer and acceptance by the Solomon Islands Government of an interdiction and assistance mission aimed at the restoration of law and order and the restart of government services and control. Not only was a five-year manpower commitment made, but considerable resources and aid were also pledged, with the lead assistance providers being Australia and New Zealand.

RAMSI's arrival in July 2003 saw crime and violence reduced to a very low rate as effective policing was restored, starting in the capital and proceeding outward. Only a pace behind this step was a very successful weapons collection program, which saw a much greater number of weapons than were thought to be in circulation (more than 3,700) collected and destroyed.

Law and order have now been restored throughout the country and RAMSI and the police have apprehended and charged many persons allegedly responsible for human rights abuses and other criminal acts. By year's end more than 340 persons, including approximately 40 police officers, were arrested, with a total of more than 600 charges brought against them. RAMSI has re-established 16 police posts around the country, increased the capacity of the courts and rebuilt to international standards the prison in Honiara.

The U.S. Embassy in Solomon Islands was closed a decade ago, and only a consular agent is maintained there. Nevertheless, the United States has voiced its full support to the assistance mission and to the Solomon Islands Government. The United States is also currently focused on developing a program to complement the successes of RAMSI, resolve conflict and bring about national unity.

## **THAILAND**

Thailand is a democratically governed constitutional monarchy. In 2001, a coalition Government, led by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai Party, was formed following general elections. The U.S. effort to promote and improve human rights in Thailand focused on extrajudicial killings, trafficking in persons, the condition of Burmese refugees and the rights of other ethnic minority groups residing within Thailand's border. Thailand's human rights record worsened during 2003 with regard to extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests. The Royal Thai Government reported that out of a total of 2,598 homicide cases during a three-month war on drugs, there were 1,386 narcotic-related deaths. Most remain unsolved.

The Government states that most of the 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.

U.S. officials at the highest levels underscored to Thai officials the need to investigate fully and credibly all extrajudicial killings related to the anti-narcotics campaign and the importance of investigating all unsolved murders and punishing those responsible. Secretary of State Powell raised U.S. concerns over this issue with Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai during 2003. In August, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman also raised this issue and stressed the importance of credible investigations to Thai Ministry of Justice officials visiting Washington on an exchange tour. Since February 2003, the Ambassador and other senior-level embassy officials and the acting Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs have made demarches to Thai officials at the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Foreign Affairs and the Royal Thai Police.

The United States continues to press for credible investigations and prosecution of these reported abuses. By the end of 2003, investigations into about half of the non-drug related killings had resulted in arrest or issuance of warrants for suspects, but only nine drug-related cases involving 23 defendants have resulted in arrests or warrants. Security force involvement was acknowledged in 55 deaths during the February to April period. Of these, 39 were forwarded to prosecutors for submission to the courts, and the other 16 remained under investigation.

In a strong example of bilateral partnership, the U.S. and Royal Thai Governments co-manage the Bangkok-based International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), a regional training center for police, military, immigration, customs and other government officials. The Thai Government provides the training facility. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003, the United States provided operational funds of \$754,000 as well as on-site technical trainers. Since ILEA's inception in 1999, more than 3,000 law enforcement officials from Thailand and some other ASEAN member countries have been trained. All ILEA curriculum includes 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.

U.S. officials, in conjunction with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations, maintain 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 Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Elizabeth Dugan traveled to Thailand in 2003 to reinforce U.S. support for Burmese political activists and economic migrant labor rights. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Kelly Ryan also visited Thailand to discuss refugee issues in January 2004.

In FY 2003, the United States contributed more than \$8 million 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 \$7.9 million for UNHCR operations in East Asia that include the provision of assistance to Burmese individuals in Thailand recognized as refugees. Other U.S.-funded programs for Burmese in Thailand included basic education for children, capacity training for teachers, principals and administrators, and training for journalists, women's and pro-democracy groups. These programs are designed and managed to assist 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. These capacity-building and democracy promotion programs totaled more than \$4 million. U.S. officials intervened with Thai government officials on numerous occasions in support of Burmese migrant workers' rights. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials traveled to the Thai-Burma border area to meet with government officials, NGOs and affected workers. The Embassy assisted several Congressional and Staff delegations in similar visits.

In 2003, the Embassy brought an American specialist in community radio to Thailand to train community radio operators and citizen action groups to operate community radio more effectively as a basic communication tool of grassroots democracy. An additional seven Thais were sent on U.S. International Visitor (IV) programs on topics related to the strengthening of democratic institutions, rule of law and human rights. Thai Muslims participated in special IV projects, including Religious Tolerance in a Democratic Society and Community Development. In southern Thailand, Thaksin University successfully implemented a U.S. Fulbright grant for Promotion of Religious Tolerance in Southern Thailand: Knowledge and Role Enhancement of Secondary School Teachers of Religious Studies and the Kenan Institute Asia also utilized a U.S.-funded grant to conduct conflict resolution training. The Embassy supported Muslim community initiatives through various grants to NGOs to increase awareness of women's rights and civic development, and funded travel expenses to Thailand for Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi, Director of Public Affairs of the Islamic Supreme Council of America, to address the roles and rights of Muslim women in America. A grant was also awarded to an NGO in southern province of Narathiwat to educate and inform provincial communities about the Thai Constitution and legal reform measures.

The United States provided \$625,000 in FY 2003 to support a new program to prevent abuses in sweatshops within Thailand. The Preventing Abuses in Sweat Shops in Thailand program provides support for the Thai Ministry of Labor's new voluntary labor standard for manufacturers, educates and builds capacity for worker-employer occupational safety and health committees in the workplace, researches labor conditions and establishes legal action centers for Thai and migrant workers in exploitative working conditions. U.S. Deputy Undersecretary of Labor for International Labor Affairs Arnold Levine traveled to Thailand in support of U.S. labor strategy in November 2003.

The Embassy 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 \$2.1 million in FY 2003 programs to combat trafficking in persons and provide assistance to victims both in Thailand and regionally. Programs included assistance with better 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.

U.S.-funded programs also included training to the Thai Police, Attorney General and NGO and government social workers on trafficking in persons laws, procedures and investigations. These programs established legal assistance centers to help victims prosecute traffickers in five Thai provinces. U.S. 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 more than 100 interdictions include traffickers and potential victims.

## **VIETNAM**

Vietnam is a single-party state, ruled and controlled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). The Government of Vietnam significantly restricted freedom of religion, speech, the press, assembly and association through a number of means during 2003. 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 also subjected religious communities to strict registration requirements and obstructed the activities of "unauthorized" religious groups, censored domestic media sources, blocked foreign radio stations and websites, and denied citizens the right to form independent organizations. Restrictions on religious freedom were particularly acute for ethnic-minority Protestant groups in the Central and Northwest Highlands and included church closings, attempts at forced renunciations of faith and religious leaders being detained or fleeing.

The United States has maintained close ties with political activists and religious groups in Vietnam in order to identify and highlight abuses. U.S. officials have pushed for progress on human rights and reform during bilateral meetings in Vietnam and the United States, including in discussions between Secretary of State Powell and Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan during his visit to the United States in December. Through various 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. U.S. diplomatic efforts have influenced the Government to permit opening of new churches in the Central Highlands, greater government tolerance for the operation of "unauthorized" churches in several areas and a reduction of prison sentences for some religious and political activists. Our programmatic efforts have helped protect trafficked women, facilitate the ratification of an International Labor Organization (ILO) convention against child labor and improve the public availability of much of Vietnam's legal code.

The United States engaged the Vietnamese Government diplomatically on human rights issues at all levels over the course of the year. U.S. officials traveled widely through the country to investigate allegations of abuses, 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. 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 CPV. 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 problems, but it has yet to translate the increased recognition of problems into tangible steps to improve the human rights situation. Due to inadequate progress on human rights concerns, the United States declined to hold a bilateral human rights dialogue with Vietnam in 2003.

The United States supported increased legal transparency in Vietnam by funding a successful \$8 million, three-year program to help the Government develop and codify a better and more transparent legal framework as part of the implementation of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement. Among the 2003 activities of this program were 54 training and policy workshops with 3,330 participants and three study tours for senior legislative and judicial officials. The Official Gazette — the Vietnamese equivalent of the Federal Register — began daily publication in July, up from six issues per month previously, making the improvements in the Vietnamese legal code available to all in both Vietnamese and English. This year the United States also began a \$200,000 per year program focused specifically on working with government officials to modernize the Vietnamese Law on Associations which, when completed, will allow independent domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to register legally.

The United States sought to advance awareness of human rights and democracy issues in the media by funding Vietnamese journalists to participate in an International Visitor program entitled ♦Democracy and Legal Reform in the United States♦ and a regional program on ♦Refugees and Trafficking.♦ The Embassy also initiated and helped arrange a Voluntary Visitor program for the Vice Chairman of the Ethnic Minorities Commission as well as other Commission representatives and officials from provinces with significant ethnic minority populations to expose them to U.S. values and treatment of minorities. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section also worked with a Vietnamese organization to fund a series of workshops in four cities on the legal rights and responsibilities of citizens, hold legal clinics and produce a series of pamphlets on such topics as citizens' rights and basic issues in the Vietnamese legal code.

The United States continued its efforts to document restrictions on religious freedom in Vietnam and to raise our concerns at all levels in interactions with the Government. For example, after U.S. officials highlighted the case of an "unofficial" Protestant church threatened with demolition in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnamese authorities backed off their threats and eventually allowed the church to continue operations. In October, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford visited Vietnam to set forth concrete steps ♦ including the release of religious prisoners and allowing the opening of new churches ♦ that the Government should take to meet international concerns. Subsequent to that visit, the Government issued a directive calling for the "continuation of normalizing of relations with the [Protestant Church] in the Central Highlands" and stating a Bible training center may be permitted to open soon. It also allowed an increase in the number of officially registered Protestant churches in the Central Highlands.

The United States continued to encourage the Vietnamese Government to ratify additional ILO conventions addressing worker rights and recognizing core worker rights. In June, the GVN ratified ILO Convention 138 on minimum working age. The United States also stressed the need to continue to discuss issues surrounding freedom of association and collective bargaining. In November 2003, U.S. Deputy Undersecretary of Labor Arnold Levine and the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs held a labor dialogue in Hanoi. The discussion was the second 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 used more than \$3 million to fund several programs that address the protection of worker rights. With funds from the U.S. Labor Department, in 2003 the United States began a program to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities as well as a project to build the capacity of the Government to combat the problem of child labor. In addition, a program on dispute prevention and resolution for representatives of more than 70 enterprises started its work and enjoyed great cooperation from the Vietnamese Government. Other U.S.-funded programs worked with the GVN to improve the country's social insurance system and social accountability standards for Vietnamese enterprises.

To counter the problem of trafficking in persons, the United States provided more than \$500,000 in funds to international NGOs. These NGOs 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. U.S. officials at the working and policy levels continued to engage Vietnamese counterparts on trafficking in persons issues, and U.S. officers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City played an important role in coordinating and focusing the international community's response to the trafficking problem in Vietnam.

### **Europe and Eurasia:**

We appreciate greatly the United States ♦ support throughout all these years and the aid and support they have extended to our country. ♦

♦ Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, January 25, 2004

The past year has shown mixed results in advancing human rights and democracy across Europe and Eurasia. The most positive overall development has been an increasingly activist and resilient civil society throughout the region, often in the face of serious repression. Where elections have been manipulated, the press has been harassed or individuals have had their rights abused, people have bravely stood up to protest and to demand change.

In Georgia, when it became clear that the Government was manipulating vote counting, peaceful demonstrations with broad popular support led to the resignation of President Shevardnadze and a new election that represented a significant improvement. Such democratic success stories are unfortunately rare, however. Azerbaijan's flawed presidential election led to violence, as opposition-led protests were soon suppressed by authorities who then used the excesses of some demonstrators as pretext for a wave of politically motivated arrests. Elsewhere in the region there were elections or constitutional referendums marred by procedural and substantive irregularities that violated democratic norms, including in Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. In Russia, there were significant flaws and misuse of state-controlled media in the run-up to the Duma elections, as well as Chechnya ♦s presidential election. However, in every case, in ever-increasing numbers, the citizens of these countries were able to observe election proceedings and document their flaws in expectation of holding their governments accountable. With important elections coming up in Belarus, Ukraine and throughout Central Asia, the United States is urging governments to take adequate measures to ensure the entire election process, including campaigns, meets Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards, and it continues to work

with civil society groups to improve the prospects for free and fair elections. Elections in Serbia and Croatia this year were judged by the OSCE to meet international standards.

Many countries continued to make legislative and structural changes that brought them closer to meeting international standards and joining Euro-Atlantic organizations. The Government of Turkey, for example, passed extensive reforms in areas such as torture, religious freedom, freedom of expression and association, and the role of the military in a democracy. However, some reforms have not yet been implemented. Property law implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is nearing completion and more than one million refugees and displaced persons have returned home. The international community, including the OSCE, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the United Nations, has played a major role in promoting progress through its assistance activities and policies. Many governments in the region resisted further democratic change, however, and there was backsliding on previous gains in a number of countries.

Other challenges remain. The continued involvement of the international community continues to be crucial to overcoming post-conflict issues, the development of democracy and rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Reports of continued violence and human rights abuses in Chechnya remind that there are those in the federal and local security forces ♦ and among the separatists ♦ who are still resorting to unacceptable methods of resolving a conflict that ought to be dealt with by political means. Significant rule of law reform from the Balkans to Central Asia is needed to ensure equal protection under the law for all citizens and to combat corruption and organized crime. Turkmenistan ♦s authoritarian regime continues its highly repressive and capricious policies.

Torture remains a problem in much of Eurasia. The United States is particularly concerned about continued reports of deaths in detention in Uzbekistan. The United States is waiting to see progress there on recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, including the introduction of habeas corpus. While there has been some progress in the Balkans, several key indicted war criminals remain at large. Media freedom remains a concern throughout much of the Eurasian region. Government efforts to restrict media freedom procedurally, e.g., through denying licenses, exerting pressure on broadcasting or newspaper management and distribution channels, or by harassing journalists is a problem throughout the region, as are "hostile takeovers" of independent media outlets. Violence and repression against religious minorities must be addressed in Georgia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and religious freedom also is limited in several other Eurasian countries and Belarus.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights employs a combination of consistent, high-level diplomacy and assistance programs. The combination of diplomatic and programmatic efforts was particularly effective in promoting a positive resolution to the post-election crisis in Georgia. The United

States continues to fund a range of country-specific and regional projects supporting free media, civil society, including human rights groups and independent labor unions, religious freedom, democratic elections, political party development, good governance, the rule of law and anti-trafficking measures. The United States uses bilateral and multilateral channels, primarily the OSCE but also the UN Commission on Human Rights, both to support positive developments and to highlight instances of abuse.

### **INDEPENDENT PRINTING PRESS IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

The Kyrgyz Republic's only independent printing press began operations on November 14, 2003, in a ceremony attended by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner and Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov. Funded by the United States and implemented by Freedom House, the printing press enables media outlets for the first time to publish without fear of being denied access to the state-run printing press or having to engage in self-censorship. Citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic and elsewhere in Central Asia are able to read non-government controlled media reports and opposition points of view that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

Culminating an 18-month effort, the printing press is the result of diligent work by Freedom House and the U.S. Embassy, with the participation of many other organizations. The Eurasia Foundation assisted in the founding and registration of the Media Support Center (MSC), the Kyrgyz non-profit foundation that operates the press. The MSC is governed by an international board of directors, including U.S. Senator John McCain as chairman, former U.S. National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and other distinguished individuals from the United States, Europe and Central Asia. The Open Society Institute financed the purchase of state-of-the-art computer-to-plate pre-print equipment and the Government of Norway contributed financially to the project. In the end, it was the U.S. Air Force stationed at Manas Air Base in Bishkek that provided the transportation for the printing press to its final destination in Bishkek.

By early 2004, the press is already printing 28 independent newspapers; in December alone the press run totaled nearly 300,000 copies. The MSC also sponsors training programs for journalists. From a technological perspective, the combination of modern pre-press technology and full-color printing will strengthen all publications' abilities to compete in the marketplace. Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Aitmatov hailed the press as a step forward for needed freedom of the press in his country. More touching was the independent journalist at the opening ceremony who also spoke, saying he had dreamed of this day, calling the opening of the press a truly epochal event. Thanking the United States, he pledged that his fellow journalists and publishers would do their part to strengthen democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic.

### **ALBANIA**

Albania is a republic with a multiparty democracy, led by Prime Minister Fatos Nano and President Alfred Moisiu. The Government's human rights record remained poor in some areas, although there were improvements in others. 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 a lack of democratic tradition.

The U.S. strategy focuses on improving election administration and credibility, expanding citizen involvement in public affairs, strengthening legislative and civil institutions, including independent media, and improving the Government's capacity to fight crime and curb corruption.

Some key successes included improved local government elections, passage of a landmark asset declaration law and a comprehensive anti-money laundering law, the airing of several documentary-style television series exposing corruption, increased convictions of senior officials and police on charges of abuse of office, and a further curtailment in human trafficking. Citizens' advocacy groups also played a greater role in speaking out against government corruption and mismanagement.

Corruption and weak rule of law remained among the greatest obstacles to improving human rights and democracy in Albania. These issues factored prominently in embassy officials' public remarks and private meetings with government officials. Visiting U.S. officials also stressed these issues with their Albanian interlocutors at every opportunity, including during the separate visits of Secretary of State Powell and U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew Natsios in May, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in June. Washington-based officials also regularly raised these concerns with visiting Albanian officials. In April the Embassy hosted a conference on promoting government transparency and accountability, bringing to Tirana representatives from the U.S. House of Representatives Ethics Committee, the General Accounting Office, Common Cause and the Oregon State Election Commission to meet with Albanian politicians, civil servants and citizens' advocates.

The United States provided funding to anti-corruption initiatives, including the Albanian Coalition Against Corruption, an umbrella organization representing 210 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals involved in the fight against corruption. The United States also supported the Citizen's Advocacy Office, an NGO offering legal assistance to private citizens in corruption cases. The result was an unprecedented level of cooperation between the Government and civil society on the issue of corruption and increased scrutiny and accountability related to central and local government activities.

In the area of law enforcement, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program supported the creation of the Office of Internal Control (OIC) in the Albanian State Police. The OIC is charged with investigating internal corruption and building a more professional police force. DOJ maintained a full-time advisor with that office. OIC investigations led to a significant increase in arrests, dismissals and other disciplinary actions against police officers for corruption and abuse



of office, including a senior police official at Mother Teresa Airport involved in migrant smuggling. Total disciplinary actions in 2003 exceeded 1,200. DOJ assisted in the creation and training of the Organized Crime Task Force, which brings together an elite group of police and prosecutors to fight organized crime and corruption.

As a result of U.S. training programs for judges and other legal officials, the climate for successful prosecutions of previously "untouchable" criminals improved, with several cases brought against notorious organized crime figures. A number of judges were dismissed on corruption after the successful implementation of a judicial code of conduct and a code of disciplinary procedures. The United States was a strong proponent of Witness Protection legislation, which is currently nearing passage in Parliament, to improve the success of prosecutions for trafficking, corruption and other crimes. The United States chaired the International Consortium, an informal mechanism for the many international donors who are involved in legal reform in Albania, to coordinate and streamline their efforts.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international observers judged Albania's local elections, held in October 2003, to be the fairest and most transparent in the country's democratic history, although administrative problems remained and there were a few isolated incidents of irregularities and violence. The progress was due in large part to important reform of Albania's electoral code, achieved with significant OSCE assistance and U.S. political support. The number of Albanians serving as election monitors with NGOs more than doubled in 2003 from the last election in 2001 (from 1,000 to 2,200 people). Assisted by the Embassy, local organizations established a Forum of Local Monitors, produced a standardized monitoring form and conducted educational campaigns and televised campaign issue debates. Embassy personnel also served as election monitors under OSCE auspices.

In 2003 the Peace Corps resumed operations in Albania, after a six-year absence. Peace Corps volunteers worked with municipal governments and local communities throughout Albania to make government more responsible and accountable to civil society, spreading democracy at the grassroots.

To help the Albanian media continue to progress from its origins as a state-controlled machine, the United States funded training programs on-site and in the United States, in order to raise the level of professionalism among reporting, editorial and management staff. U.S. officials, particularly the Ambassador, also stressed the need to ensure media freedom in public remarks and private conversations with government officials.

The Embassy has actively vetted all Joint Combined Exchanges of Training and bilateral exchange exercises with the Albanian military through the human rights vetting process. Through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, 32 officers received military training and training in

human rights, democracy and civics in the United States. In addition, the Expanded-IMET program sponsored several educational events bringing U.S. officials to Albania. For example, the Embassy arranged for the Defense Institute International to assist the Albanian Ministry of Defense's legal experts in establishing and implementing a modern code of military justice that complements civilian law.

U.S. programs also sought to promote religious freedom in Albania. Funding for local community developments that build ties between the country's four main religious groups ♦ Sunni Muslims, Bektashi Muslims, Albanian Orthodox and Roman Catholics ♦ helped maintain and foster even greater tolerance and cooperation among members of different faiths. A U.S.-supported Civic and Faith-Based Education Project was launched to develop ways to introduce the teaching of civics into religious school curricula.

The United States remains committed to eradicating trafficking in persons, and U.S. officials continue to actively engage the Government in fighting trafficking in persons, including through a country-specific strategy tailored to helping authorities meet the minimum standards as defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. In 2003 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. U.S.-assisted programs addressed the reintegration of victims, including the strengthening of women's legal rights as they relate to trafficking, domestic violence and the new Albanian Family Code. A systematic national referral mechanism to test models for sustainable reintegration and shelter mechanisms for victims of trafficking was also developed. A U.S.-funded bilateral initiative is focused on reducing the trafficking of Albanian Children to Greece and Italy.

With \$70,000 in U.S. assistance, the Government's National Reintegration Center expanded its mandate in 2003 beyond third-country nationals to provide assistance to Albanian trafficking victims, including children, and migrant workers. The Government formed the Child Trafficking Working Group to develop and pursue strategies specifically focused on combating child trafficking.

## **ARMENIA**

The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Armenia's Government held presidential and parliamentary elections in 2003. President Robert Kocharian was re-elected in a controversial vote that was marred by numerous serious irregularities; as a result, the election did not meet international standards. Some members of the security services committed human rights abuses. There were reports of arbitrary arrest and detention, and lengthy pretrial detention remained a problem. Prison reform efforts were under way, but prison conditions remained generally poor. Judges were subject to pressure from the executive branch and some were corrupt. There were some limits on freedom of the media, assembly, association and religion. Societal

violence against women was a problem. Trafficking in persons was a problem that the Government took some steps to address.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy continues to focus on fundamental issues, including the need for elections that meet international standards, the development of a vibrant civil society, respect for human rights and the rule of law, reform of the judiciary, respect for freedom of the media, assembly and religion, increased government transparency, and anti-trafficking efforts. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 totaled approximately \$22.4 million, of which about \$12.2 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs.

U.S. officials routinely meet with Armenian government officials, parliamentary opposition leaders, religious minorities and human rights activists regarding these issues. The Embassy hosted several representational events and roundtables during the year to raise awareness and encourage dialogue in support of these aims.

To promote democratic presidential and parliamentary elections, the United States repeatedly urged the Armenian Government to adapt specific reforms. The United States also funded activities to promote democratic elections, which included work with citizens groups to strengthen the integrity of voters lists and protect voter rights, political party training, training and deployment of domestic election monitors and deployment of a high level delegation of international election observers in parliamentary elections. Following last year's flawed elections, the United States joined the OSCE in raising the importance of accountability for election fraud.

U.S. programs to support the work of Armenian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the Embassy's Democracy Commission program, remained an effective means for the United States to advance its democracy and human rights agenda. With U.S. funding for projects and institutional support, local NGOs pursued initiatives to promote human rights, media freedom, democratic development and civil society.

International Visitor (IV) programs also focused on human rights and civil society development. One IV program in December 2003 focusing on prison reform and other human rights issues sent Armenian human rights activists and government officials to the United States. One of the participants was subsequently appointed Armenia's first Human Rights Ombudsman. Other IV programs focused on developing women's leadership and increasing government transparency.

Through U.S. programs focused on increasing citizen participation and awareness, 220 town hall meetings were held throughout Armenia in which local citizens raised their concerns with community leaders. Other programs included a civics education curriculum that was implemented in Armenian schools and work with

the National Assembly that increased the public's ability to access information regarding the legislature and its actions.

The United States continues to place high priority on judicial reform. After revising its approach in FY 2003 due in part to the judiciary's actions during the presidential elections, the United States continued to promote the rule of law, focusing on providing legal education and strengthening the capacity of lawyers. Judicial assistance is limited to promoting the independence and integrity of judges, including the development of a judicial code of ethics. After several years of little movement and effort on the part of Armenian judges toward promoting their own independence, a working group of judges, with U.S. assistance, developed an agenda of reforms needed for an independent judiciary. The United States is closely monitoring the progress of the working group.

The United States has been engaged with the Government as it develops an anti-corruption strategy. Embassy officials are providing commentary to the Government on the draft strategy.

To support media freedom, U.S. programs, including the Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants program and the IV program, provided training designed to strengthen the professionalism of reporting and financial viability of Armenia's independent media outlets and technical assistance for reform to create an enabling legal framework for the media.

Military-to-military contacts focused on promotion of fundamental human rights and on humanitarian outreach including medical assistance and peacekeeper exercises. To foster more professional security forces and reduce human rights abuses, the Embassy used a grant to support the training of key police officials and officials from the Procurator's office. 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 continued to highlight the issue of religious freedom. The Embassy disseminated more information than in previous years on religious freedom issues (including hard copies and Internet links to the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report) to government contacts, the NGO community, and human rights libraries in rural areas throughout Armenia. The Embassy supported successful public roundtables on religious freedom and religious minorities through Democracy Commission grants. High-level meetings with religious leaders based in Armenia and with visiting leaders from religions with communities in Armenia focused on ways to promote tolerance and more effectively include religious minorities in discussion of human rights in Armenia. The Embassy hosted representational events that included the full spectrum of Armenia's religious communities on the occasion

of an inter-faith leadership visit in Fall 2003. This event was hailed as one of the most successful gatherings of religious leaders in a non-government and secular setting.

Combating trafficking in persons continues to be on the U.S. agenda. The Embassy has strongly supported the Government's Interagency Commission to Address Issues Related to Human Trafficking, and provided input on the draft National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking. The United States funded a victims' assistance program that provided services to eight victims of trafficking in 2003, and a program for journalists and government officials on awareness campaigns and investigative reporting. The second program resulted in a marked increase in media coverage of trafficking and improved government cooperation with journalists reporting on trafficking in persons. An IV program also focused on anti-trafficking.

## **AZERBAIJAN**

Azerbaijan's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit numerous serious abuses. In October 2003, President Ilham Aliyev was elected in a controversial election marred by numerous serious irregularities; as a result, the election did not meet international standards. Members of the security forces continued to commit numerous serious abuses, including excessive use of force with demonstrators and torturing and beating persons in custody. Arbitrary arrest and detention continued and after the election, authorities conducted a wave of politically motivated detentions and arrests. More than 100 remained in detention as of March 1, 2004. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. Lengthy pre-trial detention was a problem, and fair and expeditious trials were problematic due to a judiciary dominated by the executive branch and subject to corruption. The Government continued to restrict some freedom of speech and the press, as well as freedom of assembly and association and some religious freedom, and continued to hold a number of political prisoners. Trafficking in persons was a problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Azerbaijan addresses a wide range of critical issues, including respect for human rights, democratic processes, civil society, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and anti-trafficking efforts. U.S. assistance in support of this strategy in Fiscal Year 2003 totaled approximately \$16.1 million, of which about \$7.6 million was allocated in U.S.-based training and exchanges.

In support of the U.S. strategy, State Department and embassy officials regularly meet with a range of human rights and democracy activists, representatives of pro-reform political parties and religious minorities, as well as with government officials. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe,

Members of Congress and Congressional staff traveled to Azerbaijan in 2003 and early 2004 to reinforce support for U.S. objectives.

Following post-election violence, Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage telephoned Ilham Aliyev to urge the Government not to crack down on the opposition. The Department Spokesman stated, "We are extremely concerned with the post-election violence and what appears to be a wave of politically motivated arrests." The Ambassador and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Pascoe also raised concerns with senior government officials. Both privately and publicly, the United States urged the Government either to release the detainees or transparently charge and try them in accordance with international standards. Embassy officials visited some of the detainees, including Imam Ilgar Ibrahimoglu of the Juma Mosque community, to monitor their condition. The Embassy also monitored the trials.

Recent elections have not met international standards. The United States has focused sustained effort on addressing this deficiency. In 2003, much of the U.S. human rights and democracy effort focused on promoting democratic elections in advance of the October 15 presidential election. Early in the year, U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, continued a dialogue that had begun after the 2002 constitutional referendum with senior government authorities on necessary reforms. The U.S. also provided non-partisan training to political parties on political party building and election monitoring. The United States worked to improve election administration by funding programs that provided technical assistance to the Central Election Commission (CEC), training for members of precinct and regional election commissions and a series of voter education programs.

With U.S. funding, non-partisan domestic and international observers were trained and deployed for the parliamentary by-elections and the October presidential election. U.S. funds also paid for procurement of transparent ballot boxes. In preparation for the presidential election, the Embassy established an Election Strategy Team, including non-governmental organization (NGO) representation, to coordinate the international community's efforts to promote an election that would meet standards set by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Senior U.S. officials including Secretary of State Powell, Deputy Secretary Armitage and the Ambassador, urged senior Azerbaijani officials to adopt specific reforms to strengthen the fairness and transparency of the election in three areas: the conduct of the campaign, the administration of voting procedures on election day and, most importantly, the integrity of the vote-counting process. The Embassy's public affairs section funded and coordinated the creation and distribution of anti-fraud posters to all 5,000 polling places. Democracy Commission grants to local NGOs helped to encourage the development of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan. For example, grants enabled local NGOs to host seminars on democracy.

The Embassy fielded approximately 30 observers to monitor parliamentary by-elections in March and approximately 100 observers to monitor the presidential election on October 15. The Embassy also funded the deployment of another 180 observers to monitor the vote tabulation process at the regional election commissions during the presidential election. When serious irregularities marred the conduct of both elections, the United States raised concerns with senior Azerbaijani officials. The United States also urged the CEC to invalidate the results in those polling stations where there were serious irregularities. The CEC subsequently cancelled election results in 694 polling stations; however, it did not do so in many other precincts where serious violations occurred. In the State Department's October 21 statement, the United States concluded that Azerbaijan's leadership missed an important opportunity to advance democratization by holding a credible election. The United States also called for an investigation of both the election violations and the post-election violence.

The United States also used the media to encourage citizens' participation in the democratic process. Through the International Foundation for Election Systems and Internews, the United States funded public service announcements instructing voters on their rights. The Embassy's Public Affairs section also funded the national broadcast of the Emmy-winning documentary on the American electoral process, "Vote for Me," in Azeri.

A strong civil society is integral to democracy, and the United States continues to support the development of civil society in Azerbaijan. For example, in 2003 and early 2004 the United States continued a two-year program designed to strengthen the ability of 36 NGOs to effectively represent the interests of a well-defined constituency. Democracy Commission grants have supported a variety of projects ranging from resource centers for NGO development to publication of NGO newsletters. Embassy officers have traveled throughout Azerbaijan to support NGO activities. The Embassy also works closely with the Government to help improve cooperation between the Government and NGOs.

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, assist a future bar association in developing and administering a bar exam, expand programs for law students, assist women in gaining better access to justice, and conduct a legal literacy program for the general public. A U.S. Resident Legal Advisor is working to improve legislation and to increase the professionalism and skills of the judiciary and procuracy. A U.S. program implementer and the Resident Legal Advisor are also working with the Government and private lawyers to amend the current Law on Advocates and to develop an independent bar association.

Another focus of U.S. efforts was the development of a free and responsible media. The Ambassador, embassy officials and visiting U.S. officials repeatedly urged the Government to respect media freedom.

U.S. funding supported the professional development of journalists and advocacy for media rights. U.S. programs enabled the production of three weekly television programs, and provided extensive ongoing technical and programming support to several independent television stations and newspapers. U.S. Democracy Commission grants supported newspaper production and provided training for journalists in how to avoid and defend themselves against libel charges.

In support of freedom of assembly, U.S. officials repeatedly encouraged Azerbaijan officials to authorize peaceful demonstrations by opposition parties. Embassy officials also attended several of these gatherings.

The United States has worked actively to encourage respect for religious freedom. The Embassy and officials in Washington maintained close connections with local religious communities and made contact with some communities outside Baku. U.S. officials met frequently with government officials to stress the importance of respecting religious freedom. Intervention by the Ambassador helped a local expatriate church obtain its registration. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials met frequently with government officials to urge them to not evict the independent Juma Mosque community from the historic Juma Mosque.

The United States also has used programs to encourage religious tolerance and respect for religious freedom. The Embassy organized a very successful visit by Dr. Hibba Abudigeiri of George Washington University to Azerbaijan, where she spoke about Islam in America, gender and Islam, and democracy and Islam. The State Department hosted an International Visitor program for several Muslim leaders. The Embassy actively spread the message about religious tolerance and Islam in America throughout the year, including at an Iftaar dinner hosted by the Ambassador in November.

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.

Trafficking in persons is 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 partially funded a trafficking research study by the International Organization for Migration. U.S. officials visited the region to discuss the issue, and Azerbaijani officials were invited on International Visitor programs on trafficking and to the Department's anti-trafficking conference in Washington.

## **BELARUS**



Belarus is a republic with a directly elected president and a bicameral parliament. President Alexander Lukashenko, first elected in 1994, amended the Constitution in 1996 through a seriously flawed referendum and extended his term in office in 2001 through an election that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) described as neither free nor fair. Local elections in March and November 2003 were neither free nor fair. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for Fall 2004. The judiciary is not independent.

In 2003 and early 2004, the Lukashenko government's human rights record remained very poor and worsened in some areas; although there were improvements in a few areas, it continued to commit numerous abuses. The Government effectively continued to deny citizens the right to change their government. Security forces continued to harass and detain political opponents, journalists, human rights activists and trade unionists. Police abuse and occasional torture of prisoners and detainees continued. The authorities continued to refuse to undertake serious efforts to account for the disappearances of well-known opposition political figures in previous years or to address credible reports regarding the regime's role in those disappearances. In addition to committing widespread human and civil rights violations, the regime embarked on an apparently calculated campaign to close independent media outlets and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Journalists critical of the Government were administratively punished (usually fined) on libel charges. The Government also increased its repression of independent trade unions, prompting an International Labor Organization (ILO) Commission of Inquiry to investigate serious violations of workers' rights. The authorities continued to restrict religious freedom by threatening, fining and arresting those engaged in unsanctioned religious activity. Government intimidation of opposition parties and civil society groups severely hindered the development of a transparent and democratic political process. Trafficking in persons remained a problem.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Belarus consists of applying political and economic restrictions, maintaining bilateral and multilateral diplomatic pressure, and selective engagement, monitoring and reporting on abuses. The United States funded \$8.9 million in programs to bolster independent media, political parties, civil society and trade unions, promote free and fair elections and the rule of law, and protect human rights. U.S. officials above the assistant secretary level do not meet with Belarusian authorities. The United States refuses to provide any bilateral assistance to the Government except humanitarian assistance and exchange programs with educational institutions. The United States closely cooperated with the OSCE in Belarus, and pressed hard for the Government to maintain an OSCE presence in the country. In concert with the European Union, the United States instituted visa restrictions on senior Belarusian officials that convinced the Government to agree to a new OSCE office in Minsk. Embassy staff actively monitored the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus and met with local organizations active in promoting human rights and democracy. The Embassy also established a

notification network with Western embassies and international organizations to coordinate monitoring efforts.

The Embassy continued to press the Belarusian Government to conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the disappearances of several opposition activists. In January 2003, the United States offered to provide assistance for such an investigation. U.S. officials, including Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, National Security Council officials and Members of Congress, met with family members of the disappeared who actively seek justice for their family members. The United States sponsored a resolution that passed at the 2003 UN Commission on Human Rights calling for an independent, credible investigation into the disappearances. The United States will sponsor a similar resolution in 2004.

In response to the Belarus authorities' ongoing campaign of intimidation and harassment directed against civil society, independent media and the political opposition, a joint delegation of U.S. and European Union representatives met with the Foreign Minister of Belarus in March 2004 to demand an immediate halt to this campaign and to urge the Government to take the necessary steps to ensure a free and fair electoral process for October parliamentary elections. The delegation also reaffirmed its immediate willingness to initiate serious discussions with the Government on how to improve bilateral relations. The United States will continue to monitor the situation very closely and respond appropriately to the actions of the Government of Belarus.

With specific regard to elections, the United States consistently urged the Government to hold free and fair elections and to invite an OSCE election-monitoring mission well in advance of elections. In May 2003, the United States sponsored a conference on election reform that, despite the Government's unwillingness to participate, attracted international experts and local political party and NGO representatives. U.S. funding supported political process training, technical assistance and cross-border exchanges for pro-democracy groups, focusing on internal party governance, strategic planning, membership recruitment and retention, and message formulation. Despite intense government pressure, in the March 2003 elections, 53 opposition candidates who received U.S.-funded training won seats on their local city councils. On the national level, five political parties that received U.S.-supported training formed a coalition with a common candidate list, electoral strategy and positive, democratic platform. This coalition now offers Belarusians a promising alternative in the 2004 elections.

The Embassy closely monitored the Government's calculated attacks on civil society and opposition political parties. In July, the Government refused to reregister IREX, a U.S. NGO providing assistance to independent media organizations. The Embassy released a press statement protesting this action. Embassy staff regularly observed the trials of NGOs and media outlets throughout Belarus that were targeted by the

Government for closure on flimsy pretexts. In April, former Ambassador Michael Kozak met with jailed newspaper editor Viktor Ivashkevich. The United States made statements at the OSCE Permanent Council calling on Belarus to cease its repression of civil society and independent media and supporting the OSCE's efforts to assist Belarus in meeting its OSCE commitments.

Bolstering civil society and independent media and promoting the rule of law are key U.S. goals. The Embassy's Democracy Commission program awarded grants to strengthen independent mass media and civil society.

The United States also supports journalism and management training, legal defense and on-site business consultations to strengthen independent print and broadcast media outlets and increase their capacity to provide objective, fact-based information. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003, U.S.-supported public clubs offered local forums to share information and resolve local issues. One public club generated widespread community support and convinced local authorities to co-finance a local clean water project. In 2004, the number of clubs rose to 18 throughout the country. To promote the rule of law, the United States provided legal and advocacy training for lawyers, activists and NGOs and supported the network of Legal Advice Centers.

Training, exchange and educational reform programs are another component of the U.S. democracy and human rights promotion strategy. In FY 2003, some 200 Belarusian citizens participated in professional or academic training programs. Traveling to the United States, Belarusian participants received short-term training in business, journalism, public health and secondary school administration and took part in International Visitor (IV) programs focusing on NGO management, elections, grassroots democracy, foreign policy and human rights. Fifty Belarusian students participated in the Future Leaders Exchange program, attending U.S. high schools and living with American families for one academic year.

Embassy staff also monitored the Government's hostile actions against those promoting academic freedom. U.S. officials 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 demand that the rector of the privately run European Humanities University resign and later issued a press statement describing the meeting.

The United States continued to support NGOs advocating for the rights of youth and women. Program graduates organized more than 50 community events in 2003 and spearheaded new youth groups that raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and work with at-risk youth.

As the Government implemented a new, highly restrictive law on religion, the Embassy intensively monitored violations of international norms and urged government officials to respect religious freedom. Embassy officials expanded their contacts among the religious community to include many smaller groups that have been government targets. The Embassy also assisted in arranging meetings between representatives of religious groups and high-level U.S. delegations visiting Belarus. Embassy staff participated in outreach programs with groups of American citizens visiting Belarus to discuss religious freedom issues. The Embassy also arranged for representatives of several traditional and nontraditional faiths to participate in an IV exchange program to the United States in March 2004.

The Embassy closely monitored incidents of anti-Semitism that occurred throughout Belarus. On May 31, 2003, the Embassy issued a public statement condemning the vandalism of Holocaust memorials and Jewish cemeteries in several Belarusian cities. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, along with American and international NGOs, regularly raised with the Government the concerns of international Jewish groups over the expansion of a sports stadium built on a Jewish cemetery in Grodno; this action led to agreement on the renovation and 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 and supported an ILO Commission of Inquiry in 2003. The Embassy maintained close contact with local independent labor leaders and the ILO, which is continuing to implement a U.S.-funded program promoting labor rights and independent trade unions. In 2003, eight labor leaders participated in an IV program to learn about American trade unions.

In 2003, the Embassy helped organize several anti-trafficking roundtables that included government, NGO, diplomatic mission and international organization representatives. The Embassy worked closely with the International Office for Migration's (IOM) 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 IV program in the United States. The Embassy also worked with IOM on a U.S.-funded program to raise public awareness and protect trafficking victims. The United States funded and developed a women's economic empowerment project to combat trafficking in persons.

## **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

Since the signing of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Dayton Accords), human rights abuses have diminished. Still, serious problems remained and the Government's human rights record remained poor. Police brutality continued, but police accountability for individual abuses improved. Dominant political parties and authorities continued to influence the judiciary

and to pressure and harass the media. Entity governments and private groups continued to restrict religious practice by minorities in majority areas; religious discrimination remained a problem. Trafficking in women and girls continued to be a serious issue.

U.S. efforts to improve human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) focused on strengthening the rule of law and building institutions at the state level to strengthen the effectiveness of law enforcement and the application of justice. This strategy yielded some notable successes, such as the creation of a State Court and State Prosecutor's office, which is empowered to hear cases involving organized crime and trafficking. Bosnia and Herzegovina established a nascent national law enforcement agency known as the State Information and Protection Agency, adopted new state and entity-level criminal procedure codes, and initiated a vetting process for every judge and prosecutor in the country. A new religion law was adopted and there were important developments in combating trafficking in persons (TIP). After the 2002 national elections, the Embassy worked with the international community to vet appointments to key ministerial positions, allowing the international community to reject nominees clearly unsuitable for these posts, including on human rights grounds.

The United States continued to support efforts leading to reconciliation and justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. U.S. assistance to the International Commission on Missing Persons enabled the use of cutting-edge DNA technology to help identify some of the estimated 20,000 to 30,000 persons missing from the 1992-95 conflict. Some 1,536 remains were recovered in 2003. The Embassy also provided strong political support for the construction of the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery Project. The Ambassador attended three burial ceremonies in which nearly 1,000 victims of the massacre were buried, and former U.S. President Bill Clinton spoke at the formal opening ceremony for the Memorial on September 20, 2003. The United States also continues to support minority returns in Bosnia through U.S. assistance activities.

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman visited Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 2003 to encourage further reform in Bosnia and to press home the message of Bosnian responsibility in locating and apprehending indicted war criminals. The same message was conveyed to Bosnian authorities, particularly in the Republika Srpska, during the course of several visits by Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues Pierre Prosper. Other key high-level U.S. visitors in 2003 included Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Lincoln Bloomfield, who raised human rights and democracy issues while focusing primarily on defense reform and non-proliferation issues. In addition, Presidency member Dragan Covic, Council of Ministers Chairman Adnan Terzic and Foreign Minister Mladen Ivanic paid official visits to Washington on separate occasions in 2003; discussions on human rights, democratic freedoms and combating trafficking all featured heavily in their meetings with U.S. officials.

In order to strengthen the rule of law in Bosnia and combat human rights abuses, the United States funds programs aimed at training police, prosecutors, judges and relevant authorities in criminal procedure, administrative structure and criminal justice data management. The United States provided \$1.5 million to the U.S. Department of Justice International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) to build local capacity in entity-level Ministries of Interior (responsible for policing activities), helping them implement policies to combat organized crime and terrorism and strengthening their managerial, long-range planning and personnel evaluation capabilities. The United States contributed an additional \$1 million to ICITAP's Criminal Justice System Data Management project to expand nationwide a successful pilot project allowing prosecutors to more efficiently track casework. In addition, the United States provided approximately \$7 million for associated rule of law programs, including criminal procedure code field training to judges and prosecutors, support for a Resident Legal Advisor and prosecutorial development programs, assistance to judicial and prosecutorial training centers, and seconding U.S. personnel to the State Court and State Prosecutor's offices.

The United States was also vitally involved in the development of Bosnia's judicial sector, providing \$2 million to the Independent Judicial Commission and the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils, which are responsible for appointing and disciplining judges and prosecutors to all courts (both state and entity-level). The United States also provided \$300,000 for a witness protection program for individuals who testified against war criminals at The Hague. The program helped extremely vulnerable individuals and their families relocate to safe municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States also deeply engaged in developing civil law and provided \$1.7 million through its Administrative Law and Procedural Systems (ALPS) program to eliminate barriers that average citizens continue to experience in the unwieldy 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. The ALPS project also established the first administrative law clinic in Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the Sarajevo Law School. The Embassy, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funding support for the American Bar Association, helped unify the ethnically splintered Federation Bar Association and forged an improved professional partnership between the two entity-level (Federation and Republika Srpska) bar associations.

At the municipal level, U.S. small grant mechanisms supported the efforts of municipalities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to develop grass roots democratic activity, strengthening citizen participation in civil society. The United States provided \$270,000 in grants for projects that included helping minority refugee populations gain access to information and public services, as well as form economic cooperatives, creating public councils to oversee and act as a "check" on local government performance, and strengthening the ability of women to organize and advocate their interests effectively at

local levels. The \$700,000 "New Practices" program initiated in 2003 built upon best practices in municipal governance and encouraged local governments to promote democratic reform, transparency and refugee returns. The program increased municipalities' consultation with civic groups and supported community improvements undertaken in partnerships between local governments and NGOs.

Educational programs formed an important part of the Embassy's civil society initiatives. USAID sponsored a second cycle of the National Democratic Institute's Parliamentary Internship Program, giving 58 talented interns an opportunity to serve in Bosnia's state and entity-level parliaments. The program increased the parliaments' staff resources and allowed young Bosnians to gain leadership skills and experience. The United States also played a direct role in fostering democracy education in Bosnia's schools through the Civitas civic education project. Civitas has developed a democracy and human rights course that is now taught in every secondary school in the country (and is the only course in Bosnia and Herzegovina taught with the same materials in every school). In 2003, the United States provided more than \$300,000 to Civitas to institute a formal civic education teacher certification program, building on prior in-service Civitas training for thousands of teachers across Bosnia and Herzegovina. A pilot university-level program also was developed.

Independent and self-sustaining press remained a U.S. priority. The United States sponsored a conference organized by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Press Council on professional standards and self-regulation in journalism. The United States also assisted two Sarajevo newsweeklies in relocating their printing operations, ending their dependence on a facility owned by a large and increasingly nationalist daily paper that had been known to exploit control of local printing capacity to exert pressure on competing print media. Through such support, the United States has encouraged independent voices in the media and discouraged political pressures and threats to individual journalists.

Embassy democratization efforts also extended to the military. Under the U.S.-funded Expanded International Military Education and Training program, mobile training teams were brought to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2003 to present seminars on civil-military relations. BiH officials attended courses in the United States as well, focusing on civilian control of the military. These programs underscored the military's democratic role in Western societies and pointed to necessary reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States also works to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in prohibiting discrimination on such grounds as sex, race, disability or religion. Using U.S. funding, the Centers for Civic Initiatives (CCI) in 2003 launched a national campaign under the slogan "We Are All Equal," aimed at improving the lives of disabled persons. This campaign ultimately led BiH authorities to adopt the UN Charter on Standard Rules and opened the door to enhancing the rights of disabled people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States continues to view combating the TIP problem in Bosnia as a key priority. Important developments include the creation of a state level National Coordinator's Office for Anti-TIP activities and a variety of efforts aimed at fighting complicity and corruption. In March, in the first trafficking case to be prosecuted under the new BiH-level Criminal Code, three traffickers were sentenced to up to nine years in prison. The men were part of a regional trafficking ring that forced women into prostitution across the Balkans. U.S. engagement on this issue, in particular the Embassy's efforts to focus government actions through a country-specific strategy tailored to the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, was a driving force in helping to elevate Bosnia and Herzegovina from Tier III to Tier II status in the State Department's 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report.

In addition to rule of law work supporting police and prosecutorial development to fight organized crime and trafficking, the Embassy has supported a number of workshops, conferences and internships for journalists who report on trafficking in persons. The Embassy funded a comprehensive study on human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, increasing public awareness of this issue and providing accurate data on the scope of the trafficking problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States continued to provide training and support for an interagency law enforcement task force investigating trafficking and illegal migration, and provided assistance to trafficking victims through a grant to the International Organization for Migration, which runs a shelter based in Sarajevo. U.S. officials also consistently stress the importance of combating TIP in meetings with senior BiH officials, including the Presidency, Prime Minister, Minister of Security and State Border Service, and the Entity Prime Ministers and Ministries of Interior, as well as other police officials.

## **GEORGIA**

Georgia's Government is headed by President Mikheil Saakashvili, who was elected on January 4, 2004 in an election that brought Georgia closer to meeting international standards. Parliamentary elections held on November 2, 2003 were marred by massive fraud and manipulation of results by government-controlled election commissions. Peaceful popular protests of the fraud led to the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze and the annulment of the proportional results. The Government's human rights record remained poor although there were some improvements in a few areas. Numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) blamed the Government for several deaths in custody due to physical abuse, torture or inhumane and life-threatening prison conditions. NGOs reported that police brutality continued. Security forces continued to torture, beat and otherwise abuse detainees. Corruption in law enforcement agencies remained pervasive. Arbitrary arrest and detention remained problems as did lack of accountability. Reforms to create a more independent judiciary and ensure due process were undermined by failure to pay judges in a timely manner. Lengthy delays in trials and prolonged pretrial detention remained problems. The press generally was free; however, occasionally security forces and other authorities intimidated and



used violence against journalists. Security forces refrained from violently dispersing demonstrations in November. Government officials infringed upon freedom of religion and continued to tolerate discrimination, harassment and violence against some religious minorities. Trafficking in persons remained a problem.

Previous elections in Georgia had been marred by serious irregularities that limited citizens' right to change their government. As a result, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy consisted of providing assistance designed to increase participation and transparency in the election process; combating police abuses, discrimination and harassment directed against religious minorities, corruption and trafficking in persons, supporting civil society, fostering judicial reform, and promoting independent media. U.S. assistance to support these efforts in Fiscal Year 2003 totaled approximately \$20.4 million, of which about \$8.3 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs.

In support of the U.S. strategy, U.S. officials regularly highlight publicly the need for improvements in human rights conditions. The Ambassador and other embassy officers work privately with Georgian officials, NGOs and other domestic and international organizations to identify and highlight areas of particular concern and encourage reform. Secretary of State Powell, former Secretary of State James Baker, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe, Members of Congress and Congressional staff reinforced support for U.S. objectives in Georgia in 2003 and early 2004.

To promote democracy and increase participation and transparency in the November parliamentary elections, the United States provided funding for campaign and coalition-building training for political parties, training for election commission members, training and deployment of domestic election monitors; computerization of the voters list, voter marking; and a parallel vote tabulation (PVT). At the request of the United States, former Secretary of State Baker brokered a deal between the Government and the opposition on election commission composition to increase opposition representation. The Ambassador maintained public and private pressure on the Government to meet democratic standards throughout the election process, to include protesting against violence and the incarceration of NGO election activists. U.S. assistance, especially the PVT, was instrumental in proving that the official results had been manipulated and did not reflect the will of the people. During the subsequent peaceful popular demonstrations, the Ambassador publicly and privately urged the Government and the opposition to avoid violence and to guarantee citizens' rights of assembly and expression. The demonstrations remained peaceful and eventually led to President Shevardnadze's resignation. Following the election, the Embassy secured the release of a domestic election observer arrested on Election Day for allegedly interfering in the voting process — an arrest that many NGOs considered to be politically motivated.

Following President Shevardnadze's resignation, the United States provided assistance for the January presidential election, including additional training for new election commission members, a get-out-the-vote campaign, exit polling and voter marking. The Embassy's direct intervention helped secure the participation in the election of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, a region of Georgia that had threatened to boycott. Following the presidential election, the United States immediately turned to preparing a diplomatic and assistance strategy for the repeat parliamentary elections scheduled for March 28.

The United States continues to provide strong support to leading NGOs that promote human rights, religious freedom, anti-corruption and issue-based advocacy throughout the country. Coalitions of leading NGOs now lobby for legal reform and serve as ♦watchdogs♦ both at the local and national levels. NGO mentoring partnerships have successfully strengthened many nascent organizations, helping them to become more effective at the local level.

Upholding the media ♦s independence remained a strong theme of U.S. assistance. Support for fledgling television stations, training media professionals in key aspects of journalism, assisting media outlets to become financially viable businesses and providing assistance during major legal disputes continued throughout 2003. Moreover, Georgia ♦s first independent media ratings system was launched, which will enable media outlets to fairly and openly compete for advertising funds in an increasing marketplace. During both the parliamentary and presidential elections, the United States supported debates on key issues in both print and broadcast media.

The United States pursued a vigorous policy promoting the rights of minority faiths and combating religious violence. Embassy officials attended the trial of religious extremist Basili Mkalavishvili and protested the lack of security in the courtroom and failure to follow judicial procedure. Embassy officials also intervened when followers of Basili disrupted an ecumenical service, and spoke to the congregation at a rescheduled event. The Ambassador attended a service at a Baptist Church that was destroyed in a suspicious fire, a move that encouraged senior government officials to join him. Embassy officers also defended the right of the Jehovah's Witnesses' to conduct services and import literature ♦ efforts that ultimately resulted in a sharp decrease in harassment. Senior State Department officials met with high-level government officials both in Washington and in Tbilisi to discuss violence against religious minorities. The Department sent an officer to Tbilisi to discuss this problem with government officials, religious leaders and human rights groups.

Rule of law efforts have focused on strengthening judicial integrity, implementation of the Administrative Code with its Freedom of Information (FOI) provisions to curb opportunities for corruption, and creating capacity in Georgian NGOs to monitor the performance of local government. Judges known for integrity set up a hotline for citizens to complain about suspected corruption. The judiciary ♦s willingness to enforce

the FOI provisions has led to citizens gaining information on municipal government, including budgeting and expenditures that had not previously been available.

To combat police human rights abuses, the Embassy worked closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Ministry of Justice and NGOs to monitor conditions and report abuses. The United States, through its NGO partners, provided training to the Prosecutor's office. The United States also funded human rights awareness training for the police and detention facility personnel. Embassy officials visited prisons and detention facilities and met with prisoners that alleged torture. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, all Georgian participants in U.S. security service training programs are subject to strict human rights vetting through the Defense Attaché's Office in coordination with other embassy offices.

U.S. efforts on anti-corruption stress law enforcement as well as government transparency and accountability. The United States also supports NGO watchdogs, which monitor local governments, using hotlines, citizen complaints, FOI lawsuits and budget and procurement analysis to spot problems and publicize corruption cases. Grants proved very effective in getting local branches of national agencies and local governments to be more open and more responsive to citizen participation. Several international NGOs funded by the United States also formed a coalition to monitor the former administration's national anti-corruption campaign; the coalition submitted its own shadow report on Georgian corruption problems.

Trafficking in persons remains a problem in Georgia and the United States took significant steps to assist the Government to confront it. The Embassy worked with the Georgian National Security Council to help define an anti-trafficking strategy, resulting in a public awareness campaign, the opening of a trafficking hotline and the creation of a trafficking unit in the MIA. Embassy efforts also facilitated the passage of criminal code amendments designed to fight trafficking.

In support of all these efforts, the Embassy sent various government officials and non-governmental representatives on International Visitor programs in 2003 on topics such as journalism, democracy, religious tolerance and trafficking.

Also in support of all these efforts, the Embassy's Democracy Commission awarded small grants to 15 Georgian NGOs and media outlets to address challenges in public administration and policy, civil society and mass media. Examples of successful projects in 2003 include a grant to Independent TV Lomsia in the ethnically diverse Samtskhe-Javakheti region to expand the local news production broadcasting area, grants to three Internet and resource centers, including one in Abkhazia to support the free flow of and access to information, a grant to the Union of Azerbaijani Women to offer Georgian classes to local public leaders and promote their integration into the Georgian community, and a grant to the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs to translate two American textbooks for inclusion in its Local Government Program curriculum.

## KAZAKHSTAN

During 2003 and early 2004, the Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous abuses. The Government severely limited citizens' right to change their government and democratic institutions remained weak. Members of the security forces, including police, tortured, beat and otherwise mistreated detainees on some occasions. Some officials were punished for these abuses, including the first convictions under the 2002 amendment to the criminal code on torture. Prison conditions remained harsh; however, the Government took an active role in efforts to improve prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners. The Government continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention and to selectively prosecute political opponents, and prolonged detention was a problem as well. Amendments to several laws governing the authority of prosecutors further eroded judicial independence. The Government restricted freedom of the press, assembly and association and limited democratic expression by imposing restrictions on the registration of political parties. Freedom of religion improved during the year. National and regional officials worked to correct incidents when local authorities harassed nontraditional religious groups or their members; as a consequence, such incidents declined significantly during the year. Violence against women, including domestic violence, was a serious problem. Discrimination against women, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities remained problems. The Government discriminated in favor of ethnic Kazakhs. Child labor persisted in agricultural areas. Trafficking in persons, primarily teenage girls, was a problem that the Government took steps to address.

Opposition leader Galymzhan Zhakiyanov remained imprisoned at year's end and local government elections in September and October 2003 were marred by irregularities; most analysts agreed that electoral legislation did not comply with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards and therefore disadvantaged opposition candidates. Observers reported that after the Government eliminated most media outlets that were willing to directly criticize the President in 2002 through a variety of means, including criminal and administrative charges, physical attacks and vandalism, these events continued to have a chilling effect on journalists, most of whom practiced self-censorship. After a difficult 2002, a year in which opposition politicians were imprisoned and independent media outlets harassed, the United States focused its human rights and democracy strategy on reversing the tide and resuming progress.

The United States maintained diplomatic pressure on the Government throughout 2003, culminating in a letter from Secretary of State Powell to President Nursultan Nazarbayev noting U.S. concerns about flawed draft election and media laws as well as the continuing imprisonment of Mr. Zhakiyanov and Sergey Duvanov. The Secretary also raised these issues during the July visit to the United States of Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev. Throughout the year, the United States urged the Government to give a fair hearing to independent journalist Duvanov whose criminal trial early in the year was deemed procedurally flawed by international experts. The United States also maintained forceful advocacy on

behalf of Mr. Zhakiyanov and Mukhtar Ablyazov, opposition politicians both convicted in 2002. The Ambassador, embassy officers and every senior level U.S. official to visit Kazakhstan, including Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner, raised these cases and broader democracy issues with the Government and urged that just solutions be found. In addition to applying diplomatic pressure, the United States provided visible signs of support by arranging a U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) visit to the imprisoned journalist, and by convincing the Government to allow an embassy officer to visit Mr. Zhakiyanov in his remote penitentiary. By the end of January 2004, Mr. Ablyazov had received a pardon and Mr. Duvanov was released on a parole-like arrangement allowing him to resume his work.

U.S. diplomatic work during the year was closely tied with democracy assistance programs, which totaled approximately \$13.9 million in Fiscal Year 2003. Of this total, \$6.4 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs. A key focus of diplomatic and assistance efforts was laying the foundation for improving the conduct of parliamentary elections in 2004. The U.S. assistance came partly in the form of a series of small grants by the Embassy's Democracy Commission. One of these grants went to support regional discussions among civic leaders on electoral reform. The United States also provided support to local NGOs that monitored elections and conducted exit polling during local elections in September and October. These NGOs are developing skills that allow them to provide independent electoral reform consultations as well as pre-election monitoring. Another Democracy Commission grantee launched a new Kazakh- and Russian-language television series aimed at voter education. The United States supported the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) efforts to train the only nationwide organization of independent election monitors; this local NGO will continue to work with Parliament to push for key changes to the draft election law. The United States also fielded its own team to monitor the local elections. These efforts have strengthened U.S. calls for a new electoral law that meets international standards.

The United States lobbied vigorously for electoral reform and worked closely with the OSCE in providing recommendations to government officials drafting a new electoral law. In late January 2004, a joint session of Parliament nearly unanimously approved a set of principles the Government proposed for the new election code. The OSCE had previously determined that the Government's draft law contained serious shortcomings and did not meet international standards. A joint parliamentary working group continued through February to debate amendments to the law's text; a third joint session of Parliament will debate further on March 15. The United States will continue to push for improvements to bring the law into compliance with OSCE standards.

The United States remained active on a full array of human rights concerns. With funding from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Freedom House launched in November a training program for

human rights defenders that will build capacity of human rights activists to monitor and document the human rights situation in Kazakhstan. U.S. efforts to promote civil society as the basis for not only free and fair elections in 2004, but also for long-term democratic stability, remained strong in 2003. The combined efforts of U.S. diplomatic lobbying, NDI's spearheading of an NGO advocacy campaign, and the engagement of the U.S.-funded network of NGO partners led to a government decision in Fall 2003 to withdraw a controversial law that would have unduly regulated NGOs. Furthermore, U.S. civil society programs provided training and legal support to NGOs and mobilized communities to solve local problems. This year the network expanded to eight NGO resource centers with the addition of a center in Atyrau.

The United States continued its work with the younger generation by supporting a variety of educational programs. To encourage student participation in a democratic society, the United States supports a civics education program that includes textbook and complementary student activities. The United States also funds legal education activities geared toward changing the way young legal professionals learn and practice law.

Political parties will play a crucial role in the 2004 elections. The United States continued to sponsor programs to strengthen political parties to foster a competitive electoral environment. The joint efforts of the International Republican Institute and NDI, supported by U.S. funds, are improving the capacity of political parties to represent citizens, better articulate their platforms, and compete with one another, thereby broadening the spectrum of political forces in Kazakhstan. The United States sponsored the visit of opposition political party leaders to the United States to deepen their understanding of democratic processes. The United States also sponsored a training session for local governmental (Maslikhat) candidates.

The United States continued to press the Kazakhstan Government to honor its commitment, enshrined in its Constitution and OSCE membership, to respect free speech. This came partly in the form of vigorous U.S. lobbying to prevent the imposition of new restrictions on the media. U.S.-funded organizations participated in the government-sponsored working group on proposed new media legislation and offered important suggestions to improve the draft law. While a draft law that contains several articles restrictive of freedom of speech was passed in late December 2003 by the lower house of Parliament, lobbying continues by U.S.-funded media and civic organizations in the hopes that this law will either be positively changed in the upper house, vetoed by the President, or ruled unconstitutional. A broad range of journalist organizations, including one run by President Nazarbayev's daughter, has called for the law to be withdrawn.

The United States maintained crucial support for organizations that seek to develop and strengthen the capacity of journalists and independent media outlets, including training on their rights and responsibilities in covering elections. The United States also funds Adil Soz, a local NGO, to monitor the infringement of

rights of journalists and media outlets. The United States sponsored several programs for independent media, including a Democracy Commission grant for an advocacy organization to launch a new newspaper, a grant to a nationwide television channel to run a series of programs on human rights and democracy in the Kazakh language, a Citizen's Exchange program to train journalists and programs bringing several speakers to Kazakhstan to discuss the role of an independent media.

The United States worked closely with UN High Commission for Refugees to assist the Government in upholding its commitment to the Chechen refugees in Kazakhstan. As a result, the Government's policy to deport Chechens was reversed. The United States also supported refugee communities by providing a grant to the Red Crescent/Red Cross to expand its medical assistance for the most vulnerable and neglected groups.

U.S. efforts to promote religious tolerance in the past several years produced a major step forward in 2003. Not only did President Nazarbayev initiate a series of high-profile conferences to strengthen dialogue among religious faiths, the Government also increasingly tended to its own non-traditional religious communities. On several occasions, the United States brought cases of heavy-handed harassment of religious groups by local officials to the attention of national authorities in Astana. In each instance the harassment stopped. Increasingly, the Government has intervened in such cases without pressure by the United States or others and, as a consequence, such harassment has declined significantly. The United States also encouraged the President's religious tolerance initiative by working with groups from the United States that attended the Peace and Harmony Conference held in Almaty in February 2003 and by helping to promote the goals of the conference. President Bush sent his greetings to that event, and to the Congress of World Religions held in Astana in September 2003. The United States also sponsored a month-long program to have 20 regional Muslim leaders travel to the United States in an effort to help foster understanding of religious diversity among the large population of Muslims in Kazakhstan's south, as well as other programs to promote moderate interpretations of Islam and showcase Muslim life in America.

The Embassy greatly expanded its cooperation with the Government of Kazakhstan to fight against trafficking in persons (TIP). The United States pressed for the appointment of a national TIP Coordinator, a robust national plan to combat TIP and the development of a large-scale public awareness campaign. The Government made significant progress in each of these areas. With U.S. assistance, local NGOs are working to educate the public on the dangers and impact of human trafficking, help law enforcement agencies investigate trafficking crimes and provide a host of services to trafficking victims. The Government began producing its own TIP public service announcements. The United States has worked to educate and train the media about the importance of reporting cases of trafficking.

## **KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

During 2003 and early 2004 the Kyrgyz Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in some areas; although there were improvements in some areas, it continued to commit numerous abuses. The Government severely limited citizens' right to change their government and democratic institutions remained weak. Members of the security forces at times beat and otherwise mistreated persons. Prison conditions remained very poor, but improved slightly during the year. Although impunity remained a problem, numerous law enforcement authorities were dismissed or prosecuted for abuses or misconduct. There were many cases of arbitrary arrest or detention. Executive branch domination of the judiciary limited citizens' right to due process, and its interference affected verdicts involving prominent opposition figures. The Government restricted freedom of speech and of the press, although it allowed an independent printing press and television station to begin operations. The Government used bureaucratic means to harass and pressure the independent media, some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the opposition, although a government Ombudsman's Office actively worked to advocate individual rights. Particularly problematic was a highly flawed constitutional referendum in February 2003 that strengthened control by the President and weakened the Parliament and the Constitutional Court.

With parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for 2005, the U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights 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.

To promote democracy, the United States maintains 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 November 2003 visit to Bishkek, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner and the Ambassador held discussions with local NGO 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 June 2003 and February 2004, high-level U.S. officials discussed with Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov the need for continued progress in democratization in order to broaden U.S.-Kyrgyz bilateral relations.

The Embassy criticized, both publicly and privately, the Government's highly flawed constitutional referendum in February 2003. Violations included manipulation of the ballot count, forged voting results and incidences of individuals voting multiple times or without documents. In addition, there were many occasions where election officials prevented independent observers from monitoring the election process. Following the referendum, the United States also raised concerns with Kyrgyz officials about harassment of independent and opposition observers who criticized the referendum. In late February, U.S. officials visited



Edil Baysalov, chair of the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, when he was held in a military hospital for medical testing despite several prior waivers from military service. With U.S. funding, Baysalov's organization was active in deploying independent monitors during the constitutional referendum.

Throughout the year, the United States worked closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Election Systems to provide Kyrgyz officials with concrete ways in which election legislation could be improved and brought into compliance with international norms. In December 2003, the Kyrgyz Parliament adopted a new election code, which President Akayev signed into law in January 2004. The election code, which the OSCE determined does not establish a legal framework that provides for democratic elections, will nonetheless play a crucial role in how parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005 are conducted. In late 2003, U.S. officials met extensively with pro-government and opposition legislators as well as senior government officials, including President Akayev, urging them to adhere to international standards in the coming election. President Akayev has given his pledge to step down from the presidency and to ensure a peaceful transition.

The United States was highly engaged on rule of law issues, such as arbitrary arrest and excessive use of force. U.S. officials continued to raise the need for due process in the case of imprisoned opposition leader Felix Kulov as well as the need for accountability in the 2002 police killing of unarmed protesters in Aksy. In May, U.S. officials met with a group of women whose relatives were killed or injured in the March 2002 incidents. The women initiated a hunger strike and demanded that President Akayev punish officials responsible for the protesters' deaths. U.S. officials also raised with Kyrgyz authorities the case of Galena Kaisarova, a prominent Bishkek attorney threatened with the loss of her license based on statements she made while defending her client in court.

The United States participated in planning an OSCE-sponsored community-policing project aimed at improving civil-police relations and providing training to Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies on proper crowd control tactics. Throughout 2003, the United States worked closely with the Government and the OSCE to ensure that local NGOs would have a significant opportunity to provide input during the implementation of the project.

In Fiscal Year 2003, U.S. democracy assistance programs in the Kyrgyz Republic totaled approximately \$14.2 million in technical assistance and grants in the areas of civil society, rule of law and media to strengthen democratic practices among citizens and institutions. Of this total, \$4.4 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs.

A U.S.-funded program to support human rights defenders worked closely with grassroots activists and youth leaders on training in human rights monitoring and advocacy. U.S. 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 tax code to allow grants and humanitarian aid to be tax-exempt. The number of high schools using a civics textbook developed by U.S. implementing partners increased to 324 from 170 the year before, reaching almost 20,000 students across the country. U.S. implementing partners worked with reform-minded parliamentarians and promoted public hearings as a way to elicit citizens' views on new legislation. The U.S.-funded local governance program helped to draft a new law that, starting in 2005, will change the financing of local government and allow for more local control of revenue. A growing network of U.S.-funded Information Centers for Democracy provided citizens with access to independent media and infrastructure to host "town-hall" meetings to discuss current political issues.

U.S. officials intervened with Kyrgyz government officials on numerous occasions in support of freedom of the press. During his visit to Washington June 2003, senior U.S. officials reminded Foreign Minister Aitmatov of the importance of freedom of media for democratic development. In his meetings with senior Kyrgyz officials, the Ambassador objected to a spate of ♦ honor and dignity ♦ lawsuits brought against independent media outlets that were stifling freedom of the press in the Kyrgyz Republic. Since mid-2003 there has been a reduction in the number of these cases.

A notable success was the November opening of the U.S.-funded independent printing press, the first of its kind in the Kyrgyz Republic. Assistant Secretaries Jones and Craner and the Ambassador attended the opening ceremony for the press, an event that marked the culmination of two years of effort by the Embassy and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Since its inauguration, the press has already been printing 17 independent newspapers, enabling media outlets for the first time to publish without fear of being denied access to the state-run printing press. The Media Support Center, the umbrella foundation that operates the press, also sponsored training programs for journalists. Other U.S. programs include supporting independent print and broadcast media by conducting training seminars, providing technical and legal assistance, and producing and facilitating the exchange of news programs and information for independent outlets and journalists.

The United States used public diplomacy funds to sponsor International Visitor programs focused on the issues of religious tolerance, ethics, law enforcement, human rights, promoting independent media and developing young leaders. 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 61 grants to local NGOs in support of independent media outlets, information dissemination, combating human trafficking, 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, student groups at 11 Kyrgyz universities received grants to combat corruption within the education system.

Remaining engaged on the issue of religious freedom, the United States maintained regular contacts with representatives of various religious communities and several Kyrgyz religious leaders visited the United States on the International Visitor Program. The Ambassador hosted an annual Iftaar dinner for Muslim leaders and addressed a crowd of worshipers in the Bishkek main square on the feast of Eid marking the end of Ramadan. U.S. officials met frequently with leaders of the country's largest Protestant church, who complained of government harassment, and raised the church's concerns with officials at the State Commission on Religious Affairs. As a result of U.S. efforts, the church has now been able to register but continues to experience difficulties, which the United States is monitoring.

On numerous occasions, U.S. officials lobbied for the Kyrgyz Republic to employ more effective efforts to combat international trafficking in persons. Anti-trafficking was an important component of the U.S. Information Initiative. In partial response to U.S. efforts, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted laws making trafficking a crime in August 2003. These efforts also contributed to a sharp increase in the number of prosecutions for trafficking and associated crimes in 2003. The United States launched a new two-year program to combat trafficking in persons by strengthening the capacity of local NGOs to conduct public information campaigns and provide assistance to victims. In November 2003, the Kyrgyz NGO Sezim used U.S. funding to open a shelter in Bishkek for victims of trafficking.

## **MACEDONIA, FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF**

Macedonia is a multi-ethnic, multi-party parliamentary democracy. The current multi-ethnic coalition Government is led by Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski. In February 2004, President Boris Trajkovski was killed in a plane crash; the first round of presidential elections for his successor will be held April 14, 2004. In an improvement from 2002, the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, although serious problems remained. Impunity for state agents, a corrupt and inefficient judiciary and trafficking in persons were problems. The police's human rights record improved during the year, and the state acted to combat trafficking in women. The U.S. Ambassador and EU Special Representative, in their capacities as co-facilitators of the 2001 Framework Agreement (FWA), which brought the 2001 insurgency

to an end, monitored and encouraged implementation of the agreement. Legislative implementation of the agreement, scheduled to be completed in 2004, strengthens minorities' civil rights.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Macedonia focused foremost on encouraging the Government of Macedonia to continue to implement the FWA. U.S. efforts to encourage the state to improve its current human rights performance were largely successful. The United States continued to press for a resolution of cases involving state agents of the prior government credibly accused of committing human rights crimes during 2001 and 2002. The U.S. assistance strategy addressed a wide range of critical issues, such as respect for the rule of law, support for democratic processes, civil society, free and independent media, judicial and police reform, religious freedom and anti-trafficking efforts.

The Ambassador and embassy officials, often in coordination with other representatives of the international community, frequently engaged in direct human rights advocacy. In early 2003, the Ambassador met with government officials to encourage them to implement the Amnesty Law in good faith, and to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia regarding alleged war crimes cases stemming from the 2001 conflict. Subsequently, the Government decided to remove from office Chief Public Prosecutor Stavre Jikov, who had obstructed prosecution of state agents.

The United States continues to emphasize that international norms, as well as Macedonia's aspirations to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), require that the country bring human rights abusers to account. On numerous occasions, the Embassy pressed the Government to bring to justice the perpetrators of the 2002 Rostanski Lozija massacre, in which police in the former government murdered seven South Asian itinerant workers and planted weapons and National Liberation Army uniforms on their persons in a blatant attempt to incriminate them. Despite constant pressure by the United States and other international actors, the state has yet to open judicial proceedings against the perpetrators or their political masters.

In March 2003, after a mine killed two Polish NATO soldiers, the Ambassador traveled to Lipkovo, a northern Macedonian village, to send a clear message that the United States would not tolerate violent extremism in the region. He pressed the Government to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. In May 2003, the Ambassador, in coordination with government officials, met with ethnic Albanians in Vejce, a northern Macedonian village near the Kosovo border, to defuse an armed standoff and persuade the local residents to allow ethnic Macedonian family members to place flowers at the site where eight ethnic Macedonian security force members were killed in 2001. A dignified, positive outcome resulted.

The United States continued to work with the Government to ensure FWA-mandated legislation passed parliament. Many of these legislative actions relate to the devolution of power to local governments and

strengthened civil rights for minorities. The Embassy emphasized the importance of efficient and transparent local government as critical to consolidating Macedonia's democracy. The United States allocated more than \$2.7 million in 2003 to the Government's decentralization efforts.

The United States promoted the right to a fair, speedy and transparent trial as basic elements of a defendant's right to due process in all of its program activities, which include investigating and prosecuting human and narcotics trafficking, money-laundering and other serious crimes, assistance in penal code reform and day-to-day cooperation with the Macedonian judiciary. The United States contributed more than \$3 million in assistance to improve the effectiveness of the courts, the quality of judicial decision-making, judicial access for under-served groups and minorities, and the work of public prosecutors.

Police reform, focusing on expanding minority representation and improving human rights performance, is a central requirement of the FWA and an important factor in ensuring the country's future stability. The U.S. Department of Justice International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) is supporting a community policing model. ICITAP provides guidance to the Ministry of Interior's Professional Standards Unit, which is responsible for rules of conduct, internal investigations and policy development. ICITAP trained police and community members in leadership development, forming community action teams, using citizen-advisory groups and developing a police academy. ICITAP works in close coordination with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the EU's new police advisory mission, Proxima, inaugurated on December 15, 2003.

To advance the protection of human rights, the Embassy awarded grants totaling approximately \$275,000 for projects to improve basic human rights, empower minorities, promote a free and independent press, strengthen the rule of law and other themes that support equality and basic freedoms. The American Corner in Bitola, Macedonia's third largest city, regularly hosts programs to increase public awareness of human and civil rights. The Embassy disseminates U.S. government material on human rights to key contacts in the media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others. Video products explaining human rights were distributed to and displayed by local broadcasters. The Ambassador served as the host of an annual embassy initiative recognizing the contributions of women to society. Training programs for journalists that are designed to inculcate the practices of an independent media and their role as societal watchdog continued.

The United States worked with 90 community groups in coordination with municipal governments to use community meetings to identify local communities' most urgent needs and provided \$650,000 in grants, primarily to under-served communities, to support HIV/AIDS prevention, conflict reduction, youth employment and community development.

The International Republican Institute (IRI), with \$600,000 in U.S. grants, focused on efforts to strengthen political parties' organization, improve their communication with the public and increase youth and women's participation in politics. In preparation for the fall 2004 local elections, IRI is working to prepare women and youth to run for office and manage election campaigns. IRI also conducted regular opinion polls, and worked with political parties on how to use the results to better address the public's concerns. The United States allocated \$1.3 million to parliamentary assistance and legislative strengthening, of which \$900,000 was used by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to work with members of parliament from all parties, including minority members, to ensure that the interests and rights of citizens are well represented in the legislature. NDI helped members of parliament conduct public hearings to ensure that citizens' interests and rights are appropriately accounted for in draft legislation. NDI also helped 70 members of Parliament establish 40 constituency offices around the country, with the aim of making parliamentarians more accessible to their constituents, and supported a parliamentary intern program.

The Ambassador and other embassy officers regularly met with Macedonian religious groups. The Embassy closely monitors an ongoing dispute between the Macedonian and Serbian Orthodox Churches over the Macedonian Church's 1967 declaration of independence from the Serbian Church and associated freedom of religion concerns. In August 2003, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Charles Ries and embassy officials attended the Dialogue Among Civilizations Conference, which brought together numerous heads of State as well as representatives of religious groups.

To help improve workers' rights, the United States provided \$500,000 to allow the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) to implement a labor union education and outreach program. ACILS' education and exchange programs on privatization, collective bargaining and social dialogue helped trade unions develop effective strategies for engaging employer representatives, including alternatives to strikes that were in fact utilized. ACILS was also successful in encouraging the ethnic integration of trade unions and in keeping integrated trade unions intact despite inter-ethnic tensions stemming from the 2001 conflict.

Initiatives to help combat Macedonia's human trafficking problem through training, education and public awareness campaigns were conducted throughout the year. ICITAP hosted an ongoing series of training programs intended to strengthen collaboration among prosecutors, police and investigative judges, as well as improve prosecutorial and police techniques to combat trafficking. Coordination and support of activities and programs sponsored by the international community, which was actively engaged in anti-trafficking issues, was an integral part of the Embassy's overall efforts. U.S. representatives participated in the National Commission for Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons.

The Embassy conducted an exchange program to demonstrate how the United States combats trafficking, disseminated State Department reports and other relevant documents and targeted small grants at NGOs to raise public awareness about human trafficking. The United States allocated \$595,000 to anti-trafficking activities, including a variety of activities with NGOs, media education campaigns and police training. NGO activities include development of television programs and brochures, focus groups and town hall meetings, especially in eastern Macedonia and rural areas, to raise low-income women's awareness of the issue. A network of organizations will be formed throughout the country to provide services and counseling to victims, potential victims and their families. The Embassy also sponsored a Human Trafficking Reporting Awards program in 2003 to encourage local media to investigate and report on issues related to trafficking.

Advocacy by the Ambassador and embassy officials on anti-trafficking issues was instrumental in the recapture and sentencing of a notorious Macedonian trafficker, Dilaver Bojku, and in another case where six traffickers received prison sentences for a trafficking incident in which three victims were killed. As a result of U.S. and international community involvement, there has been an overall increase in both the number of trafficking related convictions and length of prison sentences.

## **MOLDOVA**

The Constitution of Moldova provides for a multiparty representative government with power divided among a president, cabinet, parliament and judiciary. In 2001, parliamentary elections resulted in a new communist parliamentary majority and government. The elections were generally free and fair; however, authorities in the separatist Transnistria region interfered with the ability of residents there to vote. In 2001, the Parliament elected Communist Party leader Vladimir Voronin president. Although local elections in May and June 2003 generally met international standards, observers raised concerns about intimidation and arrests of some opposition candidates, pressure on independent media and use of the state media to broadcast biased information. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, judges were reportedly subject to outside influence and corruption.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas, and the human rights record of the Transnistrian authorities was poor. Citizens generally had the right to change their government, although this right was severely restricted in Transnistria. Authorities reportedly tortured and beat some persons, particularly detainees and Roma. Prison conditions remained harsh. Security forces were widely believed to monitor political figures, use unauthorized wiretaps and at times conduct illegal searches. There were some restrictions on freedom of the press, including defamation and calumny laws that encouraged self-censorship, and the Government continued to restrict access to independent media. During the year, the Government adopted new limits on freedom of association. A few

religious groups continued to encounter difficulties in obtaining official registration. Societal violence and discrimination against women, children and Roma persisted. There were some limits on workers' rights. Trafficking in women and girls remained a very serious problem.

The Transnistrian authorities reportedly continued to use torture and arbitrary arrest and detention. Prison conditions in Transnistria remained harsh, and three ethnic Moldovan members of the Ilascu group remained in prison despite charges by international groups that their trials were biased and unfair. Human rights groups were not permitted to visit prisoners in Transnistria. Transnistrian authorities harassed independent media, restricted freedom of association and of religion, and discriminated against Romanian-speakers.

The U.S. strategy to promote human rights and democracy in Moldova focuses on strengthening the rule of law, good governance and civil society, promoting free and fair elections and combating trafficking in persons. In Fiscal Year 2003, U.S. democracy assistance programs in Moldova totaled more than \$8.4 million in technical assistance and grants. Of this total, \$4.2 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs.

The United States supported several efforts to promote the rule of law in Moldova. The Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) worked with the Government to combat corruption and human trafficking, and increase the effectiveness of law enforcement assistance programs. To combat corruption, the RLA's initiatives included a series of training seminars and roundtables addressing criminal procedure and prosecutor-investigator teamwork, efforts to institute codes of conduct, conflict of interest rules and independent audits within law enforcement bodies, and efforts to draft, enact and implement anti-corruption laws and policies. The U.S.-funded Criminal Law program conducted training for judges on human rights and training for the defense bar on advocacy skills.

Other rule of law programs provided training and assistance on advocating human rights issues (including freedom of speech, association and religion, minority rights, labor law and family law), building legal associations and developing institutional capacity. The advocacy program in particular helped citizens gain a better understanding of the legal system.

To improve local governance, the United States worked with more than 50 communities to improve fiscal management skills and capacities, increase transparency and citizen participation in community decision making and improve strategic planning for local governments and municipal associations.

The United States undertook a number of activities specifically related to local elections in 2003, including training local observers and election officials, fielding international observers, organizing a get-out-the-vote campaign and making repeated diplomatic interventions with Moldovan officials on the importance of free



and fair elections. These efforts, combined with those of other international donors, helped prevent more serious problems from occurring.

Several initiatives were undertaken to strengthen civil society. U.S. programs helped to foster local political leadership and support a non-governmental organization (NGO) resource center that worked to improve the accountability and managerial capacity of reform-oriented civil society groups. The Embassy-administered Democracy Commission program supported an information Internet portal called Moldova Azi, an independent newspaper that publishes a weekly youth supplement promoting democratic values and freedoms among youth in Transnistria, and a center working on children's rights.

The United States promoted media freedom in several ways. In 2003, the Ambassador raised concerns over licensing issues for independent media with high-level Moldovan officials. Many media outlets and media-related NGOs received U.S. financial support to implement different projects that promote freedom of speech and access to a full range of opinions. The United States supported the Institute of Social Technologies in producing 50 radio programs promoting democratic principles and human rights that aired on National Radio, Sanatatea radio in Edinet in producing a program for youth, Jurnal de Chisinau in developing and printing a column on small business, Flor TV in Floresti in producing a program promoting freedom of speech and free access to information, the Ungheni newspaper Unghiul in publishing its youth supplement "Junior" and Cuvintul Liber newspaper in Leova in publishing articles on women's issues.

In addition, the Embassy sponsored several exchange programs, some of which are targeted at journalists. During 2003, ten Moldovan journalists traveled to St. Louis and spent three weeks discussing strategies and methods of investigative journalism with their American counterparts. The Embassy has also sent Moldovan journalists to the United States each year for the past several years to participate in a program called Television Cooperation. Through this program, teams of Moldovan journalists have the opportunity to work with an American producer and create programs about American life and American approaches to various issues for broadcast in Moldova. Last year, a team from Euro TV traveled to the United States and produced a series of programs on local elections in the United States.

The United States also brought American media experts to Moldova to participate in seminars and conferences with Moldovan media professionals and students. During 2003, an American professor taught Moldovan journalism students basic principles of news reporting, interviewing and newspaper design and layout during a summer camp, a former U.S. news anchor participated in a similar camp for more advanced students and young professionals on fundamentals of broadcast media and an American professor presented a course at Moldova State University on media ethics. The United States also continued to support a three-year partnership between Moldova State University, the Department of Communications, the Independent Journalism Center and Missouri School of Journalism to improve journalism education in Moldova.

The Expanded International Military Education and Training program promoted respect for human rights in the Moldovan military by providing a seminar on civil-military relations, emergency response training for military and civilian physicians, a seminar on "Legal Aspects of Deployment on Peacekeeping Missions" for the Moldovan military contingent sent to Iraq and a course for military officers on "Military and Peacekeeping Operations in Accordance with Rule of Law." The Defense Department also supported 18 military, civilian and law enforcement officials in Marshall Center courses focusing on democracy, civil-military relations and regional security issues. To ensure that the United States trains individuals who have not violated human rights, the United States uses a vetting procedure in accordance with the Leahy amendment.

In an effort to highlight U.S. concern for religious freedom, the Ambassador met with leaders of most major religious groups in 2003. The Embassy raised concerns about some religious groups' persistent registration difficulties to the Government's State Service on Religions. In December 2003, the Embassy forwarded copies of Holocaust-related documents turned over by the Government to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials repeatedly emphasized the importance of combating trafficking in persons. The RLA provided technical assistance for judges, prosecutors and investigators on trafficking in persons, including training that emphasized education, sensitivity and skills development, supported the creation of anti-trafficking units, case review teams, and working groups, with the goal of having a unit in each of Moldova's administrative regions provided assistance to improve law enforcement cooperation between transit and destination countries and provided legislative drafting assistance.

The United States continued to support the work of the Center for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women to provide legal assistance and counseling, legal representation and help processing identity papers and other lost documents for victims. Through the Center, the United States also promoted and developed specialized legal knowledge and practices for applying anti-trafficking laws and norms, and monitored activities related to strengthening the judiciary's capacity to reduce trafficking. Funding for an information campaign, implemented by the International Organization for Migration, targeted potential and actual victims of trafficking and relevant Moldovan authorities, seeking to prevent trafficking by increasing public awareness of a new toll-free hotline number and strengthening governmental institutions' and society's understanding of trafficking. In November 2003, the Embassy supported the Association of Electronic Media to distribute TV footage of a national conference on combating trafficking to local television stations in rural areas.

## **RUSSIA**

Although the Russian Government generally respected human rights in some areas, its human rights record worsened in a few areas in 2003. Its record remained poor in Chechnya, where there were credible reports of serious violations, including numerous reports of unlawful killings, and of abuses of civilians by both federal security forces and the Kadyrov regime as well as by Chechen fighters. Parliamentary elections in December 2003 failed to meet international standards. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) issued a press release calling the March presidential election "generally well administered" but "lacking elements of a genuine democratic contest," citing the "dearth of meaningful debate" and the bias in state-controlled television in particular. Throughout 2003 and early 2004, Russian government pressure weakened freedom of expression and the media, and independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their supporters came under increased pressure. Credible reports continued that law enforcement personnel engaged in violence and other brutal or humiliating behavior, often with impunity. Although seriously impaired by corruption and undue influence from the executive branch, the judiciary showed some increasing independence. A series of alleged espionage cases caused continued concerns regarding the lack of due process and the influence of the Federal Security Service in court cases. Authorities harassed and imposed restrictions on some religious groups. Ethnic minorities, including Roma and persons from the Caucasus and Central Asia, experienced widespread governmental and societal discrimination, including violence. Limits on workers' rights increased, as did reports of forced labor and child labor. Trafficking in persons remained a serious problem.

The U.S. human rights strategy in Russia is to promote awareness and respect for the entire range of human rights, an open, transparent and representative democratic political system, including a vibrant civil society, fundamental freedoms; development of a fair and impartial judiciary and access to diverse and independent media. U.S. assistance in support of these goals in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 totaled approximately \$79.2 million, of which about \$48 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchanges.

In his September 2003 meeting with President Vladimir Putin at Camp David, President Bush raised a broad range of bilateral issues including democracy and human rights concerns such as Chechnya. In a January trip to Moscow, Secretary of State Powell raised democracy and human rights concerns, including Chechnya, media freedom and rule of law. In an op-ed in the prominent newspaper *Izvestiya*, he acknowledged that the civic institutions of a democratic society take time to develop, but welcomed the future prospect that Russia would achieve stable democratic institutions, noting that "without basic principles shared in common, our relationship will not achieve its potential."

Senior U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, made human rights a major public diplomacy theme, urging improvements in human rights conditions and focusing on specific cases. 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 human rights climate.

The gravest threat to human rights in Russia continued to be the conflict in Chechnya. During the joint press conference of Presidents Bush and Putin following their September meeting at Camp David, President Bush stated, ♦ Terrorists must be opposed wherever they spread chaos and destruction, including Chechnya. A lasting solution to that conflict will require an end to terror, respect for human rights and a political settlement that leads to free and fair elections. ♦ Senior U.S. officials, including Secretary Powell and the Ambassador, regularly expressed concern and continued their dialogue on the conduct of the Russian military in Chechnya with high-level Russian political and military leaders and with Russian and American NGOs. In public and private forums, U.S. officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones, used testimony before Congress, regular meetings with the Russian President's aide for Chechnya, media interviews and public speeches to highlight the issue. They stressed both publicly and privately that the conflict in Chechnya requires a political, not military, solution, that Russian forces in Chechnya should end human rights abuses, and that the Russian Government should hold those found responsible accountable when violations occur. The United States also called on the Chechen leadership to end terrorist acts and violence against civilians, repudiate terrorism in word and deed and cut all ties to Chechen and international terrorists. The day after the October presidential election in Chechnya, the State Department Spokesman stated, ♦ Unfortunately, the presidential election that took place yesterday and the political process that led up to it fell short of the potential for producing a positive democratic outcome. ♦

The United States voted for the European Union ♦s resolution on Chechnya at the 2003 UN Commission on Human Rights. The United States used OSCE forums to convey human rights and humanitarian concerns about Chechnya. Secretary Powell drew attention to human rights abuses in Chechnya during his address to the OSCE ♦s Ministerial Meeting in December. U.S. funding supported efforts by Russians to promote accountability for human rights abuses in Chechnya. U.S. officials repeatedly urged that all returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Chechnya be purely voluntary and that IDPs in tent camps who wish to remain in Ingushetiya be given the choice of moving to alternative shelter. The United States supported legal assistance to indigent people, including through an NGO that assisted nearly 5,000 IDPs in the North Caucasus in FY 2003. Also in FY 2003, the United States gave a total of \$22.5 million to international humanitarian assistance programs addressing a wide range of IDP needs in the North Caucasus, and the United States continues to provide such assistance.

Throughout 2003, U.S. partners trained electoral and party officials as well as independent poll watchers for the December 2003 Duma elections and continued such activities in early 2004 for the March presidential election. Special training for election reporting was also organized for mass media representatives in the regions. With U.S. funding, one Russian NGO organized, in 30 regions, the first independent domestic election observation mission. The United States supported and closely coordinated with program implementers who provided training and development activities for Russian political parties

and citizens groups. Following the Duma elections, the State Department Spokesman expressed concern with the conduct of the elections, stating, "It's clear to us that administrative resources were widely used to assist pro-Kremlin parties."

A strong civil society is integral to democracy. To assist Russia's civil society, the United States supports nearly 2,000 NGOs through resource centers, direct grants and technical assistance. The United States continued to support Russian human rights activists' efforts to raise awareness and respect for human rights and broaden networks of NGOs across the country. For example, in 2003 one U.S.-supported project continued to fund the training of human rights activists in the use of data and other social marketing techniques to mount public awareness campaigns about human rights in the regions. Strengthening civil society also was a key theme in public diplomacy work, which included holding meetings with activists including a meeting by Secretary Powell during his January 2004 trip to Moscow and highlighting the U.S. stance in the Russian media.

To foster respect for the rule of law, the United States provided expert advice to legislators, judges, court administrators, prosecutors, defense attorneys and law enforcement officials to facilitate the development and functioning of an independent judiciary and a fair, impartial justice system. The United States continued to monitor and assist in the implementation of the new Criminal Procedure Code, which is turning the rights promised by Russia's Constitution into practice, expanding the use of jury trials for certain crimes and establishing adversarial proceedings, including new procedures that place the defense on a more equal footing with the state. The United States worked with several judiciary organs to strengthen judicial governance, court administration and ethics. Other U.S. programs fostered legal education reforms such as legal clinics, work on gender-related issues, rights of the physically and mentally challenged, labor rights and migrant rights and advocacy skills of individuals and organizations. The Russian Leadership/Open World Program continued to expand ties between the Russian judiciary, procuracy, defense law experts and their U.S. counterparts.

Continued government pressure on the independent media raised major concern. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials often raised the issue with Russian officials and maintained a dialogue with Russian editors, journalists and media advocates through day-to-day contacts and periodic roundtable meetings on media freedom. In 2003, U.S. programs provided training and exchange opportunities to professional journalists and students and expanded public access Internet sites. For instance, one U.S. partner trained more than 1,000 participants from 200 regional television stations in management, journalism, sales and production skills. The United States also funded the production and distribution of materials covering media independence, journalists' rights and responsibilities and freedom of speech to television and radio stations in eight target regions of Russia. It supported improved legal literacy of

regional television companies, adoption of a legal and policy framework for open and democratic Internet development in Russia, and improved legal literacy and protection of regional newspapers.

Senior U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, maintained a dialogue on freedom of religion and belief, and on religious and ethnic tolerance, with Russian government officials, religious denominations and NGOs. The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission hosted a series of lunches and receptions and encouraged Russian officials to meet with visiting delegations on religious issues. When the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom visited Russia in January 2003, the Embassy lent active support, securing ministerial-level meetings and facilitating public and media outreach opportunities.

The United States continued to monitor crucial court cases and visa issues affecting religious workers across Russia. A Department official traveled to Moscow to raise religious freedom concerns with government officials and met with others, especially those involved in crucial court cases and visa issues. The Embassy established the Tolerance Grants Initiative under the Democracy Commission and provided ten grants to NGOs working to improve interethnic and inter-religious tolerance. U.S. assistance to three regional tolerance councils brought together the general public, law enforcement officials, local NGOs and local governments to combat intolerant attitudes toward various ethnic and religious groups. International Visitor programs focused on Islam in America and on Tolerance and Diversity for Russian Muslim leaders. In December 2003, the Ambassador hosted a roundtable on human rights in Russia.

Gender issues remained a central element of U.S. human rights strategy. An inter-embassy working group coordinated Embassy efforts on women's issues. A U.S. gender-law program trained legal specialists to handle domestic violence cases and other gender-related issues. Its implementing partner worked to change how law enforcement bodies respond to domestic violence complaints. The U.S.-supported Women's Consortium drafted and successfully promoted equal rights legislation passed on the first reading by the legislature in 2003.

The United States also continued working to promote the rights of the disabled and children. A U.S.-assisted NGO project promoted access to education for disabled students. As a result of a U.S. partner's efforts, the Nizhny Novgorod and Samara governments earmarked funds to build access ramps and provide services to help integrate disabled students at more than 20 schools. The Nizhny Novgorod Resource Center, with help from the University of Oklahoma, strengthened local resources to prevent juvenile delinquency in the Nizhny Novgorod region. Their teams of trained experts were able to reach 336 at-risk children and adolescents in 2003.

A key aspect of promoting human rights and international norms is to train military officials and legislators responsible for defense issues. The U.S.-funded Expanded International Military Education and Training

program provided training for Russian legislative staffers in civil-military relations and for a legal scholar in jury trials. To ensure the United States trains individuals who have not violated human rights, the United States uses a vetting procedure in accordance with the Leahy amendment, which also serves as the benchmark for the U.S. military's European Command.

Workers' rights and trafficking remained priority issues. In 2003, the United States urged Russian officials to permit the AFL-CIO's long-serving representative in Moscow, Irene Stevenson, to return to Russia after she was denied reentry into Russia in December 2002. The United States supported public interest law centers, trade union legal departments and individual lawyers committed to social and labor rights. Public interest law clinics provided 8,800 legal consultations and represented workers in more than 1,000 court hearings. Trade union educational programs included seminars on the new labor code and civil procedures code.

With U.S. help, organizations devoted to preventing trafficking in Russia engaged in public outreach, service provision and promotion of legislation. The United States also supported the efforts of the Russian Government to combat the problem by providing expertise in drafting anti-trafficking legislation, training and equipment to form Russian anti-trafficking taskforces and other types of assistance. These efforts bore fruit in 2003, when President Putin identified human trafficking as a top law enforcement priority and sponsored U.S.-suggested amendments to the Russian Criminal Code. These amendments included provisions criminalizing human trafficking and the use of forced labor. With U.S. assistance, NGOs in five regions worked with local governments and the public to raise awareness about trafficking and the need for legal and governmental responses, while providing counseling to more than 2,000 women. They also supported a training network to provide at-risk women with opportunities for professional development.

## **TAJKISTAN**

Tajikistan is ruled by an authoritarian regime that has established some nominally democratic institutions, including a Constitution adopted in 1994. The politically motivated violence and kidnappings of the post-civil war period have ceased. Citizens' right to change their government remained restricted. A June 2003 referendum on 56 constitutional amendments, including granting the president the possibility of two more terms, was passed with little opportunity for debate amid widespread irregularities. The Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in a few areas; although there were improvements in a few areas, it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Police and security forces occasionally tortured, beat and abused detainees and other persons with impunity. The Government arrested and detained fewer persons arbitrarily and for political reasons than in the past, but it continued to restrict freedom of association and assembly by exercising strict control over political organizations and delaying registration of political parties. The Government instituted new restrictive laws on free speech and media

and harassed several independent newspapers. The Government continued to require registration of religious institutions and monitor the content of mosque sermons, although to a lesser extent than in previous years. The judiciary was subject to political and other pressures, and trial delays were common. Trafficking in persons remained a serious problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focuses on building government and civil society capacity, promoting the rule of law and free and fair elections and combating trafficking in persons. The United States took advantage of the ever-improving security situation and rapidly expanding U.S. presence by increasing engagement with all levels of the Tajik Government and international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In Fiscal Year 2003, U.S. democracy assistance in Tajikistan totaled more than \$7.5 million in technical assistance and grants in the areas of human rights, civil society, rule of law and media to strengthen democratic practices among citizens and institutions. Of this total, \$1.9 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs.

In support of human rights, the United States funded two regional programs in 2003: one establishing a network of 28 human rights advocates in the Fergana Valley that was instrumental in the adoption of amendments to the criminal code by Tajikistan's overseeing commission and awarded community grants, and another assessing and building the capacity of human rights NGOs. In November, embassy personnel began attending a bimonthly UN human rights thematic group to share information and ideas and to raise concerns.

To strengthen the rule of law, the United States funded programs to train lawyers, judges and law students, provide judges with civil law volumes, disseminate legal information and support the development of professional associations that advocate for legal reforms. Presently, U.S.-sponsored training programs are the only source for updated legislative information in remote areas. In addition, the Embassy's Democracy Commission program funded several Tajik NGOs that disseminated legal information to women, youths, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

To promote free and fair elections, embassy officials observed and reported on the flawed 2003 constitutional referendum. Embassy staff met repeatedly with the election committee head and the deputy chairman of the lower house of parliament, held consultations with other diplomatic missions and, along with other high-level U.S. officials, consistently raised the need for free and fair elections with all levels of the Tajik Government and in press statements. In preparation for elections in 2005, the United States is urging the Government to adopt the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-vetted election law amendments that were submitted by two of the political parties in Parliament. The United



States collaborates with the OSCE and UN offices as well as local and international NGOs to build local election monitoring capacity, and regularly participates in election strategy working groups with other embassies and international organizations.

On March 2, 2004, the Ambassador delivered a landmark speech on democracy at Tajik State University before a large audience of invited government officials, journalists, NGO representatives, students and the diplomatic corps. The speech was a clear marker of international expectations for democratic norms in the run-up to early-2005 parliamentary elections. The State Department also highlights these themes prominently during ongoing contacts with the Embassy of Tajikistan and with high-ranking Tajik officials when they visit Washington. For example, when Secretary of State Powell met with the Tajik Foreign Minister in Washington, D.C., in March 2004, he highlighted the importance of Tajikistan holding democratic elections that meet international standards.

To strengthen civil society and encourage political pluralism, the United States lends public and diplomatic support to political parties and to NGOs that promote civil society development. Embassy staff met with representatives from heretofore-unregistered parties to encourage them to submit their registration documents and attended party-sponsored press conferences denouncing the Government's delay tactics. Through its assistance program, the United States supports a national network of NGO resource centers, trains NGOs and awards grants to advocate legal reform, mobilize communities to solve local problems and hold their government officials accountable. Through the Democracy Commission, the Embassy funded Tajik NGOs that promoted civil society capacity and provided legal education specifically for women. The United States also funds a civics textbook program. The textbook is for 9th graders, and a companion text is under development for 10th graders.

In support of media freedom, the United States funds training for young journalists to produce a weekly television program promoting youth participation and Media Resource Centers that develop the capacity of independent media outlets in the Fergana Valley and provide small grants. The United States provides support to 14 independent local television stations scattered throughout the country. In 2003, these stations continued to broadcast two weekly supported by U.S. Agency for International Development information programs ♦ ♦The Pulse of Life♦ and ♦Open Asia.♦ Two government-controlled television stations in the capital are now broadcasting these programs as well. Independent media faced increasing pressure at the end of 2003 and early 2004. Embassy officials met numerous times with editors of opposition papers under government scrutiny. In early January, the Embassy convened diplomatic missions to discuss media restrictions, which resulted in a statement from the European Union presidency at the OSCE and a statement by the U.S. Mission to the OSCE calling on the Government to respect its OSCE commitments to media freedom. U.S. officials in Dushanbe and Washington, D.C., the Ambassador and other embassy officials consistently raise this issue with the Tajik Government.

The U.S.-funded Expanded International Military Education and Training program provided training to military and civilian personnel that fosters a better understanding of civilian control of the military, rule of law and human rights. The Embassy Defense Attaché's Office sent more than 80 participants to Marshall Center-sponsored programs and other exchange programs that promoted human rights and democracy. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, Tajik participants in any U.S.-sponsored training or exchanges are regularly vetted for human rights abuses.

Many programs and human rights promotion efforts are specifically designed to help women. After the 1992-97 Tajik civil war, many women became the head of household. This trend is exacerbated by mass male economic migration to Russia. The Embassy funded micro-finance programs for women. The Democracy Commission funded projects that addressed the rights and needs of women and children, ranging from increasing their legal knowledge to creating a teen crisis hotline.

To promote religious freedom, embassy staff consistently advocated religious tolerance and regularly investigated transgressions. The Ambassador hosted an Iftaar dinner in the new residence to foster tolerance. When two Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested for holding an unregistered religious meeting, embassy staff met with the head of the State Committee on Religion and helped broker a resolution. Embassy staff also investigated reports of anti-Semitism when the sole Dushanbe synagogue was slated to be torn down to make room for a civic improvement project. The United States determined that anti-Semitism was not involved, and the Ambassador has met with the Tajik Jewish community in New York to seek their assistance to build a new synagogue in Dushanbe if the city government pursues its urban renewal project.

To combat trafficking in persons, the Embassy supported the training of law enforcement officials and the establishment, in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration, of information centers for workers. The Embassy is developing a strategy to educate women about trafficking.

## **TURKEY**

Turkey is a constitutional republic with a multiparty parliamentary system and a president with limited powers elected by the single-chamber parliament. In 2000, Parliament elected Ahmet Necdet Sezer as President for a seven-year term and in March 2003, Justice and Development Party Chairman Recep Tayyip Erdogan became Prime Minister. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens. There were improvements in a number of areas, but problems remained including military influence over the political process and reported incidents of torture. Erdogan's government has passed a series of reforms to address these problems. An October 2001 constitutional amendment revised the military-civilian balance of the National Security Council (NSC) in favor of a 9-5 civilian majority.

Subsequent reforms allowed for a civilian to serve as the NSC's Secretary General and reduced the number of regular NSC meetings to every other month. The Government passed extensive human rights reform packages that covered a broadening of laws on torture, impunity, access to attorneys, fair trials and freedom of speech. Erdogan's government also adopted a zero tolerance policy on torture. Although all of the reforms have not been fully implemented, the Government has committed publicly to doing so by the end of 2004.

The United States focused on a broad range of human rights fields, including police and judicial practices, freedom from torture, religious freedom, freedom of expression, government ethics, trafficking in persons and the right of return for internally displaced persons (IDPs). U.S. officials regularly raise human rights issues with visiting Turkish government delegations, and did so most recently during Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to the United States in January 2004 and Turkish Justice Minister Cemil Cicek's visit in December 2003. Secretary Powell also wrote a letter to Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul on February 19 stressing the need for Turkey to continue to work on its human rights record and to implement the recent political reforms. U.S. officials also stay in contact with European Union (EU) officials to discuss Turkey's efforts to fulfill the Copenhagen political criteria. Embassy 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 Government. 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.

The Embassy has emphasized the importance of prosecuting, convicting and sentencing to appropriate jail terms police who commit torture. On April 4, 2003, a Turkish appeals court upheld the conviction all ten police defendants in the high-profile Manisa torture case and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from five to 11 years. (According to the Prosecution Law, their actual time behind bars is expected to range from two years to four years, four months.) In addition, Parliament passed legislation lengthening the statute of limitations for torture and prohibiting courts from suspending or postponing sentences in torture cases. The United States contributed \$895,000 to the Center for the Victims of Torture's New Tactics in Human Rights project which brings together human rights activists to share strategies and experience, and will culminate in an international conference in Ankara next year.

In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Defense Attach's Office worked closely with the Ministry of Defense to vet military units for U.S. training. The Government formally signed a U.S. government memorandum of intent (MOI) for anti-terrorist training for law enforcement officials. To date, \$8.5 million in course offerings have been provided to Turkish law enforcement authorities. Under the MOI, which both the U.S. and Turkish Governments have been following in principle for almost a decade in the absence of a

formal agreement, the United States will provide training organized through the Embassy while the Government screens training candidates for human rights violations.

Together with the Young Businessmen's Association of Turkey, the Embassy held a seminar on Ethics and Government with State Department-sponsored speaker David Apol, Associate General Counsel in the U.S. Office of Government Ethics. The seminar was designed to raise public awareness of ethics issues and build support for the establishment in Turkey of an office to implement a government ethics program.

The State Department funded an American Council of Young Political Leaders delegation visit to Turkey for programs in Ankara and Istanbul in conjunction with the ARI Movement, a non-governmental organization (NGO) devoted to democracy building. The Embassy helped send two U.S. academics to the International Political Science Association Meeting at Bogazici University in Istanbul who spoke on "U.S. Political Systems, Elections and Political Parties." The Embassy's Political Counselor addressed the topic of Turkish political, economic and social reform before a major Turkish foreign policy association in Istanbul.

The Embassy worked closely with NGOs to help strengthen civil society in Turkey. Because an important issue for Turkish NGOs was their legal status vis-à-vis the Government, the United States supported a conference on the NGO Legal Framework organized by the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV) to strengthen advocacy for creating a regulatory framework friendly to civil society. Douglas Rutzen, President of the Washington D.C.-based International Center for Non-Profit Law, spoke at the conference and a series of meetings to help TUSEV demonstrate to the Government that its relationship with NGOs could be mutually beneficial.

The International Visitor (IV) program continues to provide opportunities for professionals in all fields to be introduced to the United States and American counterparts. Two-thirds of the 2003 IV participants joined projects related to democracy and human rights. Projects on Civic Education, Municipal Government in the United States, Human Rights and Legislation, and NGOs and Municipalities were designed to give Turkish contacts a focused look at democratic practices and human rights issues.

The Institute for the Study and Development of Legal Systems (ISDLS) and the U.S. Department of Justice continued activities from U.S. grants totaling \$512,000 to engage U.S. judges and prosecutors and their Turkish counterparts in discussions of freedom of expressions and elimination of torture and to promote sustained professional relations. ISDLS brought Justice Mustafa Bumin, President of the Turkish Constitutional Court, to the United States for consultations.

The Ambassador and other high-level embassy officials meet regularly with Justice Ministry officials to improve judicial treatment of Turkey's obligations under the Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of

International Child Abduction and ensure that child abduction cases move as swiftly as possible through the court system.

The Embassy has also stressed the need to allow free religious expression for all faiths, including all Protestant denominations, Jehovah's Witnesses and Baha'i Faith, which are not recognized by the Government. Turkish authorities rescinded in December an order to expropriate a property sacred to Baha'is in Edirne. The United States, at the highest levels, continues to urge the Turkish Government to re-open the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki seminary on the island of Heybeli. Embassy and other U.S. officials continue to engage with the Directorate of Religious Affairs in dialogue on religion.

Embassy officials worked with the Government to take greater measures to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). As a result, the Government launched a number of initiatives in 2003, earning a promotion from Tier III to Tier II in the State Department's TIP report. The Mission continues to urge the Government to follow up on these initiatives.

## **TURKMENISTAN**

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 legally may 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, the Peoples Council replaced it as the supreme legislative body. President Niyazov controlled the judicial system.

The Government of Turkmenistan's poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. The human rights situation deteriorated markedly 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 hundreds of suspects' relatives. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) called for fact-finding missions by international envoys to investigate those reports; the Government refused to facilitate such visits. Throughout 2003 and early 2004, the Government grew increasingly repressive in response to perceived threats to the regime. In early 2003, the Government made ill-defined crimes against the state punishable with life imprisonment and imposed an exit visa regime on its citizens, making it extremely difficult for Turkmen citizens to travel abroad. The exit visa requirement was formally lifted in January 2004. In

November 2003, the Government enacted draconian laws on public organizations and religious groups that severely curtail freedom of association and religion by imposing criminal penalties for unregistered activities. The Government severely restricts freedom of speech and does not permit freedom of the press. There were no domestic human rights groups because of restrictions on freedom of speech and association.

The United States implemented a three-pronged approach to promote 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, by iterating its concerns in public statements and by invoking the possibility of Jackson-Vanik sanctions if the Government did not lift exit visa requirements. 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 has supported programs designed to strengthen civil society.

The United States and nine other 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. The United States has supported unsuccessful efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross to gain access to prisoners detained following that attack. In April 2003, UNCHR members, including the United States, successfully passed a resolution condemning the Government for human rights abuses and calling on the Government to adopt measures called for by the OSCE Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur. In November 2003, the United States and the European Union (EU) jointly introduced a UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution condemning the Government's human rights abuses. The Government recently stated that it is willing to begin a dialogue with the governments that sponsored the UNGA resolution. The United States and the EU are again sponsoring a resolution on the human rights situation in Turkmenistan at the UNCHR in 2004.

In response to the imposition of the exit visa regime, the United States determined that Turkmenistan did not meet the requirements for freedom of emigration under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1994. The Government's assurance that the exit regime visa would be temporary prompted President Bush to grant a temporary waiver of mandatory sanctions. The United States notified the Government that it was risking Jackson-Vanik sanctions, and in January 2004 the Government formally lifted the exit visa regime although implementation of this decision remains incomplete.

To implement the second prong of the strategy, the United States advocated on behalf of individual cases of human rights abuse. In 2003, the Embassy helped coordinate international condemnation of the Government's decision to detain civil society leader Farid Tukhbatullin, directly contributing to his release in April 2003. The Embassy coordinated with other diplomatic missions to protest the forcible abduction, beating and resettlement of a 77-year old man, whose "crime" was being the father of an individual accused

of criminal acts by the Government. The Embassy consistently monitored and actively advocated on behalf of a reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty who has frequently been 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.

In response to a resurgence of harassment of religious minority groups and a repressive new law on religion, Turkmenistan is currently in danger of being designated a ♦Country of Particular Concern♦ by the United States under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. Embassy advocacy on behalf of a beleaguered religious minority group helped save one congregation member's job.

The 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. 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 U.S. Embassies in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan successfully urged the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to follow up on a case involving the forcible resettlement of UNHCR-registered refugees. The Embassy is a principal point of contact and advocacy for individual cases of abuse.

The third prong of the strategy is to fund programs that strengthen civil society. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003, U.S. democracy assistance programs in Turkmenistan totaled approximately \$4.7 million, of which, \$2.8 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs.

In 2003, the Embassy awarded 24 Democracy Commission grants focusing on civic education, Internet access and the free flow of information, community self-help, and women's and human rights issues. The U.S.-funded civil society development program focuses on grassroots community development and advocacy. In FY 2003, 37 capacity-building training events were conducted for more than 550 participants under this program. Civil society support centers have also been opened in four of the country's five administrative regions to provide community-based resources offering management and advocacy training programs to strengthen non-governmental organizations.

In 2003, the United States gave more than 150 future leaders the opportunity to study and receive training in the United States through exchange programs. Three new American Corners and two Internet Access Training Program sites were opened last year, 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 21 Turkmen college students to attend the American University of Central Asia in the Kyrgyz Republic.

In 2003, U.S. funding to combat trafficking in persons 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 trafficking in persons in Turkmenistan. Funding also supports an anti-trafficking public education campaign and training for the Border Service to combat trafficking.

## **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). Flawed parliamentary and local elections in 2002 and 2003 restricted citizens' right to change their government. Eleventh-hour, procedurally flawed constitutional amendment proposals in December 2003 and February 2004 raised concerns about Ukraine's commitment to democracy. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Members of the security forces committed human rights abuses including torture and custodial deaths with impunity. Arbitrary arrest and detention, sometimes from what appeared to be political motivation, remained a problem. Authorities continued to interfere with news media by harassing and intimidating journalists, censoring material and pressuring them to apply self-censorship. The Government failed to render justice for murdered journalists Heorhiy Gongadze and Ihor Aleksandrov. In the latter part of 2003 and in early 2004, 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 women and girls remained a serious problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Ukraine focuses on creating the conditions for free and fair October 2004 presidential elections. This includes strengthening the rule of law, independent media and respect for civil liberties, and improving monitoring and advocacy capacity of human rights organizations. Combating trafficking in persons is also a key goal. To this end, the United States engaged in diplomatic efforts and supported a variety of assistance programs.

Diplomatically, the Ambassador, embassy officers and senior U.S. officials regularly met with relevant officials in Kiev, including President Leonid Kuchma, and the regions, and Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky met with high-level Ukrainian officials in Washington, D.C., to stress that membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and other Euro-Atlantic institutions hinges on respect for democracy and human rights. This message was reinforced in March 2004 when Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage met with President Kuchma, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko and opposition leaders Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko in Kiev. Deputy Secretary Armitage stressed the importance of Ukraine holding free, fair,



open and democratic presidential campaigns and elections in October 2004 in order for Ukraine to achieve its stated goal of joining Euro-Atlantic institutions and for U.S.-Ukraine relations to deepen. In particular, the United States has called for an end to harassment of independent media and the abuse of administrative resources, especially tax inspections targeting certain businesses associated with the opposition, and to attempts to amend the Constitution during the pre-electoral period. Under Secretary Dobriansky regularly met with high-level Ukrainian officials and urged them to respect human rights and uphold democratic practices especially in the run-up to the October 2004 elections.

U.S. officials continuously work with members of the international community through multilateral institutions such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations to press the Government to uphold its international human rights commitments.

Programmatically, the United States provides financial and technical assistance to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and technical assistance to governmental bodies. In Fiscal Year 2003, U.S. democracy assistance to Ukraine totaled \$55 million, about \$26.5 million of which was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs. Embassy officials also extensively monitor and report on democracy and human rights issues and regularly coordinate assistance strategies with donors and members of the international community.

In order to strengthen the rule of law, the United States funded efforts to increase the independence and efficiency of the judiciary. Key components include establishing the first National Independent Judges Association, which provides judges with a forum to share information and resources and a mechanism to strengthen the judiciary as a counterweight to the executive branch, training judges and developing and implementing a computerized court administration program that increased pilot courts' processing capacity by nearly 100 percent and reduced corruption. In 2003, a U.S.-funded anti-corruption program provided more than 7,000 legal consultations and represented citizens in more than 1,000 cases against government officials.

Through the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program and the Media Development Fund, the Embassy helped establish a network of NGOs that advocates human rights and media freedoms, providing 42 grants to organizations that monitor and report on human rights abuses, monitor elections and help develop the NGO sector. In September, the grantees held their second annual human rights and media freedom conference to discuss the results of their monitoring. Ambassador Herbst made his first speech on the importance of human rights at the September Democracy Commission conference, garnering press attention for the event and for the U.S. stand on these issues.

The United States continues to employ a variety of means to promote the conditions for free and fair elections in Ukraine. The United States consistently emphasizes to Ukrainian officials the importance of holding elections that fully meet OSCE standards. High-level U.S. officials and public figures also traveled to Ukraine in 2003 to deliver this message and will do so again in 2004. The State Department issued a statement decrying the establishment of a parliamentary commission to investigate foreign and foreign-funded NGOs involved in election-related activities. The United States and the Council of Europe voiced objections to last minute, procedurally flawed constitutional amendment proposals resulting in the withdrawal of the most controversial component. The United States also pressed the Government to appoint balanced electoral commissions resulting in the confirmation of two opposition members. Election-related programs focus on reforming key institutions, bolstering administrative capacity, coordinating domestic and international efforts, improving monitoring, increasing civic education, and strengthening independent media.

U.S. assistance aims to help Ukraine improve and comply with its electoral legislation and regulatory framework. The goal is to create the necessary institutions for democratic elections at every level. The program also aims to strengthen the professionalism, competence and independence of election commission members, civil servants, judges and all officials involved in administering, supervising and adjudicating elections.

The Ambassador initiated a series of roundtables with the international community and NGOs involved in elections, political analysis and media issues to identify the steps necessary for a free and fair campaign and election and to facilitate coordination of election-related projects and resources. In addition, the Embassy helped organize a working group of more than 20 embassies to monitor the campaign and elections to ensure that any irregularities are recorded.

The United States is working extensively with NGOs, parliamentarians and election administrators at the national and local levels on long and short-term election monitoring, voter education and the development of sound election laws and administration. With U.S. support, the Committee of Voters of Ukraine conducted the first civic, long-term pre-election monitoring for the 2002 parliamentary elections, as well as for by-elections in 2003. The results were widely disseminated and published on the Internet. Another program will focus on increasing the effectiveness of civic organizations observing and monitoring elections for compliance with international standards. Additionally, the program will improve public access to information helping voters to make informed choices and raise voters' and candidates' awareness of their electoral rights and responsibilities.

The United States continues to promote media freedom in a variety of ways. In response to Government attempts to restrict media freedom, the United States worked with other members of the international

community, including the OSCE, to press the Government to uphold its international commitments to media freedom. The United States consistently emphasizes the fundamental right of journalists to report in an objective manner without fear of reprisal. Senior U.S. officials continue to urge the Government to conduct full and transparent investigations of murdered journalists Heorhiy Gongadze and Ihor Aleksandrov and to hold those responsible accountable.

The United States also supports free and independent media in Ukraine by providing a wide range of support to Ukrainian journalists, media organizations and other NGOs, with the aim of improving the financial sustainability of outlets and supporting the production of balanced news. Projects focus on improving the legal, administrative and fiscal environment for Ukrainian media, expanding Internet use, improving professional journalist standards, providing legal assistance and increasing the operating capacity of independent media. Sixty-three percent of the journalists who received legal assistance under these programs won their cases. Training for journalists and technical assistance to 16 media outlets helped improve media quality and quantity. Consequently, fledgling media associations have emerged as strong free speech advocates.

The United States provided extensive grants and training to civil society organizations (CSOs) in an effort to foster civic activism and promote freedom of association. During 2003, the United States funded grants to CSOs in more than 15 oblasts to support advocacy and legislative reform, private enterprise development, improved public administration and training. These CSOs helped develop a national network of pro bono advocacy centers and student legal clinics that defend a broad spectrum of citizens' rights. More than 4,000 clients received assistance by the end of 2003. Senior U.S. officials repeatedly pressed the Government to register the International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute so they could carry out projects supporting political party development; they were registered in September 2003.

To help eliminate human rights abuses committed by security forces, the Embassy continues 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 will continue to send two mobile training teams to provide instruction on human rights issues. To ensure that the United States trains individuals who have not violated human rights, the United States uses a vetting procedure in accordance with the Leahy amendment.

Religious freedom continues to improve, but some registration difficulties and property restitution issues remain. The United States actively works with the Government to protect religious sites neglected or mistreated during the Soviet era. The United States also actively encouraged the Government to return religious properties and edifices to their rightful owners. The United States requested that the Government

register religious groups who have requested registration and permit religious groups, including minority and non-native faiths, to practice freely.

The United States supports the labor movement in its efforts to obtain full government recognition as well as freedom to associate and bargain collectively. The Embassy supported NGO-administered seminars, maintained ongoing contact with union representatives and regularly reported on workers' rights issues. The U.S. Department of Labor funds a number of technical assistance programs in Ukraine to promote basic rights of workers.

Eliminating trafficking in persons and assisting victims are priorities. The United States hosted international conferences in Ukraine to raise awareness about trafficking. The United States funds a number of well-respected organizations that assist trafficking victims and works to prevent trafficking through educational programs and information hotlines. More than 52,000 people have consulted the various hotlines to date. Partly due to U.S. efforts, the Government increased its collaboration with anti-trafficking NGOs. The Ukrainian Ombudsman publicly praised the United States for its consistent, energetic support of anti-trafficking efforts.

## **UZBEKISTAN**

Uzbekistan is an authoritarian country with limited civil and political rights. During 2003 and early 2004 the Government's human rights record remained very poor, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. Torture is endemic, prison conditions are extremely harsh, and independent journalists, opposition politicians and human rights activists are subject to harassment. There were at least four suspicious deaths in custody, possibly due to physical mistreatment on the part of the security forces in 2003. At year's end, the number of persons in prison for political or religious reasons, primarily individuals the Government believed were associated with extremist Islamic political groups, was estimated to be between 5,300 and 5,800. 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. Following a January 2002 referendum, which multilateral organizations and foreign embassies refused to observe because they did not believe the foundations for free and fair elections existed, President Karimov's term was extended from five to seven years. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2004, but to date, no opposition parties have been registered.

The United States would like to see the Government of Uzbekistan achieve greater institutional progress, particularly in the area of democratic reform. The U.S. approach intensive discussions on human rights and democratization at all levels of government, direct government-to-government human rights training and legal reform assistance, support to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and active collaboration with Uzbek human rights activists has produced positive results for civil society. U.S.

engagement both in Washington, D.C., and in Tashkent has been key in producing these results. Although no independent political parties were registered by year's end, with the assistance of the U.S.-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI), opposition parties were able to conduct grass-roots activities and convene organizing congresses. Local human rights advocacy and monitoring groups operate in cooperation with international human rights organizations such as U.S.-funded Freedom House. Following the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Government drafted an Action Plan to implement the Special Rapporteur's recommendations. The International Committee of the Red Cross continues to enjoy satisfactory access to Uzbekistan's prisons. Working with Embassy Tashkent and local NGOs, the Government has been intensively engaged in combating trafficking in persons.

The U.S. strategy has been to engage with Uzbekistan on two levels. The first includes work with NGOs and committed individuals to expand civil society, develop the foundations of a free press and create space for human rights activism and independent political expression. The United States has also devoted considerable attention on exchanges and training, with a view to providing the next generation with the tools necessary to move Uzbekistan's politics and society out of the shadow of its Soviet past. In Fiscal Year 2003, U.S. democracy assistance programs in Uzbekistan totaled \$15.9 million, of which \$6.3 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs.

The second level of the U.S. strategy focuses on engaging in a vigorous bilateral dialogue with the Government on a host of issues, from democratization to religious tolerance, from legal and penitentiary reform to advocacy on behalf of specific prisoners of conscience. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner visited Uzbekistan in November to highlight U.S. human rights and democracy concerns. The following month, for the first time, President Bush did not certify Uzbekistan as making progress under the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program human rights criteria. At approximately the same time, the Government of Uzbekistan issued a Cabinet decree that would have placed restrictive and burdensome registration and reporting requirements on U.S. implementing partners. After extensive discussions at the highest levels, including during a February visit by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the Government agreed in early March to abide by the terms of the 1994 Bilateral Agreement which will enable U.S. NGOs and grantees to continue their activities unrestricted.

The continuing prevalence of torture was consistently at the top of the human rights agenda. In 2003, four suspicious deaths in custody drew international attention. The Ambassador and his staff raised these and other cases continually with their counterparts at all levels of government, as did a stream of visitors, ranging from high-level State Department officials to influential Members of Congress. At the urging of embassy and State Department officials, the General Prosecutor is pursuing charges against law-

enforcement officers associated with one death and has reopened its investigation into another. The United States works with victims' family members, local human rights activists and international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch to actively investigate allegations of torture and raise them with officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, National Security Service and Internal Affairs (MVD).

In addressing the problem of torture, the United States has placed great emphasis on the findings of UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Theo Van Boven. Van Boven's final report, issued in February 2003, concluded that "torture or similar ill-treatment is systematic" and issued a series of recommendations. The United States encouraged the Government to take these seriously, and in May, an inter-ministerial working group was convened to develop a response. The product, a draft Action Plan to combat torture, was released at the end of August at a meeting of foreign embassies and local and international human rights NGOs and was to be finalized in November. Although the document has not yet been formally adopted, the United States is working with the Government to enact some of the plan's important provisions. In cooperation with the U.S.-funded American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI), for example, the Government introduced new legislation in its criminal code dealing with torture. Draft habeas corpus legislation written with ABA/CEELI support, which the Government has pledged to introduce in the Spring 2004 parliamentary session, is currently under review. The United States is also urging Uzbekistan to finalize the Draft Action Plan and to appoint a high-level official to be responsible for a swifter implementation.

Because much of the most serious abuse occurs in detention, the United States has focused considerable attention on training police and prison officers. The Departments of State and Justice have provided courses on greater professionalization of law enforcement personnel. A U.S.-funded Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) initiative instructs prison officials on international standards of human rights practice and trains local NGOs on the basics of prison monitoring. As mandated by the Leahy amendment, all Uzbek participants in U.S. security service training programs are subject to strict human rights vetting.

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 community. In 2003, the United States inaugurated a three-year program to develop civil society in Uzbekistan by supporting a national network of seven NGO resource centers. A related civic advocacy support program helps NGOs become more involved in public policy issues. In an effort to cultivate new groups, the Embassy's Democracy Commission awarded grants to independent NGOs that are in the vanguard of developing civil society in Uzbekistan. Largely through these micro-grants a number of human rights activists have been able to do valuable reporting and advocacy work in the regions.

Freedom House and ABA/CEELI are key components of U.S. strategy. Funded jointly through the U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Freedom House offers a secure environment for human rights activists to network and organize, and its resource center provides 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. Freedom House opened a branch in the Fergana Valley in June. Under ABA/CEELI's supervision, the United States has funded a human rights law clinic at the Tashkent State Law Institute, designed to train young lawyers in human rights law by giving them practical experience on providing consultations. A second clinic is being organized at Namangan State University. Graduates of the clinics are forming a law firm specializing in human rights cases, with U.S. funds and ABA/CEELI guidance.

Under the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Agreement, the Government committed itself to moving toward a multi-party democracy. Despite consistent calls from the United States for political reform, the record has been mixed, and there has not been the type of progress the Agreement envisages. No opposition party was registered by year's end, and opposition politicians, Erk Party members especially, are still subject to harassment. The U.S. message on political reform has been clearly articulated to the highest levels of the Uzbek Government by U.S. officials in Tashkent and Washington, D.C.

The U.S.-funded NDI and IRI worked actively with Uzbekistan's opposition parties, providing guidance on grassroots organizing, press relations, and the drafting of party platforms. NDI and IRI training programs helped the Party of Agrarians and Entrepreneurs, the Free Farmers Party and Birlik to organize and develop the skills necessary to hold regional and national congresses and to submit registration applications. While the Government continues to deny these parties registration, these political activities, unprecedented in Uzbekistan, reached thousands of people throughout the country, providing an invaluable education in how party politics works at the local level. U.S. efforts have resulted in more citizens being willing to risk harassment and engage in political expression than has been seen in years.

Fundamental to democratic governance is the rule of law. Drawing from successes in Turkey, the Embassy's Resident Legal Advisor initiated a program that identified key members of the Uzbek judiciary and Prosecutor's Office for a series of exchanges; U.S. participants included federal judges and prosecutors. U.S. grantees have conducted numerous seminars and study tours designed to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and to promote judicial ethics. In an effort to expand access to competent legal assistance, ABA/CEELI operates Public Defender Centers in Nukus and Fergana and will be opening another three in 2004. Another U.S.-supported project, the Women's Integrated Legal Literacy Project, has reached more than 35,000 people on the subject of women's legal rights.

Official censorship of the press ended on May 8, 2002. Nevertheless, self-censorship remains a concern because new legislation holds editors and publishers responsible for the content of articles that appear in their publications. Still, over the past year, some journalists have attempted to push the envelope, and a number of critical pieces have appeared in print and on the air addressing such themes as corruption, trafficking in persons and deteriorating economic conditions.

Broadening access to objective information and supporting the efforts of those journalists willing to test the limits continues to be a priority. U.S.-funded training programs have helped expose promising print and broadcast journalists to modern, independent journalistic practices. In spite of government harassment, the U.S.-funded Institute for War and Peace Reporting has conducted trainings designed to expand coverage of human rights issues in Uzbekistan. 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 production 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) opened two additional sites in Kokand and Chirchik, bringing the total to 18 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.

Uzbek government policy severely restricted religious freedom. A continuing campaign against political groups that the Government suspects are involved in extremist Islamic activity, primarily the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir, has tended to constrain religious practice. Some observant Muslims, particularly young men, 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; proselytism is illegal, as is private religious instruction. The United States is engaged actively in monitoring religious freedom issues and maintains active 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 Ministry of Justice, 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. The Community Connections program has brought local Islamic leaders to the United States, exposing them to the diversity of religious practice in America. A three-year Comparative Religious Studies Program, funded by the United States, arranges exchanges of experts and professors from five local



universities, a major goal of which 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 complimentary goals.

Trafficking in persons remained a problem, but with U.S. assistance, the Government began to take serious steps to combat it in 2003. Working together, the United States, local NGOs and the Uzbek Government developed a number of innovative campaigns designed to educate the public, prevent trafficking and ensure prosecution of traffickers. The key NGO in this effort was funded by a U.S. Democracy Commission grant. Throughout the year, the United States supported trainings designed to teach Uzbek consular officials techniques to assist trafficking victims. Additional training programs focused on enhancing the ability of law enforcement and the Office of the General Prosecutor to combat trafficking rings. In September, the United States sponsored an OSCE event in which key Uzbek officials from the General Prosecutor's office, MVD and the National Security Service met their Ukrainian counterparts and trafficking-in-persons NGO representatives in Kiev to discuss methods for combating trafficking. As a result of these joint efforts, regular articles on trafficking have appeared in Uzbek newspapers, and several radio and television shows have addressed the subject. The MVD has trained approximately 300 district-level officers from the four largest districts of Tashkent, who in turn conducted training in 150 neighborhoods ♦ reaching more than 11,000 Tashkent residents, and cases of suspected trafficking are being vigorously prosecuted.

### **Middle East and North Africa:**

After a year of liberation, Iraqis start to think, to move, to work, to believe and to pray without any form of repression, and we are moving toward a democratic system. ♦

-♦ Dr. Mohammed Ihasen, regional Human Rights Minister for the Kurdish Democratic Party, based in Irbil, Iraq

Promoting democracy and human rights is now a central pillar of U.S. policy in the Middle East. As President Bush stated on November 6, 2003, ♦ the United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. ♦ Through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and in consultation with Middle Eastern governments, civil society and G-8, European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners, the United States will continue to support reform in the Middle East to increase freedom, political modernization and prosperity.

Positive trends toward democratization and human rights protection continued in a number of countries over the past year. In Iraq, a U.S.-led Coalition has ended the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and is supporting the establishment of a democratic, pluralist government. In Morocco, parliament passed a new

family law improving the status of women and creating a more egalitarian society. The citizens of Jordan and Yemen elected new parliaments in elections that were generally free and fair. More women have been appointed to ministerial positions in countries across the region. New legislation in Bahrain authorizing trade unions has resulted in a nascent labor movement, with 40 unions registering over the past year and a half. New human rights commissions have been created in Jordan and Egypt; their actions and influence bear watching. In some parts of the region, Internet access is increasing and there is a growing diversity of choice among Arabic-language satellite television broadcasters. This means that more citizens are beginning to shop freely for ideas in the world marketplace and heavy, governmental control over media is slowly being eroded.

Despite these promising steps toward greater political participation and respect for fundamental freedoms in some Middle Eastern countries, the overall trends in the region are cause for concern. Many countries still suffer from systemic denials of political freedom. Women cannot vote or be gainfully employed in some countries and some governments severely restrict free speech, religious freedom and the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Demographics and slow economic growth mean continued high unemployment, particularly among youth. This combination of economic and political stagnation will breed greater political instability, insecurity and poverty if not overcome. Education has also stagnated in the Middle East, leaving large numbers of illiterate adults, under-educated children and a work force that lacks the education and training required to compete successfully in global markets. Many citizens of the Middle East have also been radicalized by religious education at the expense of secular education in history, civics, economics, reading, writing, mathematics and science. Respect for the religious beliefs and practices of all citizens and groups is limited or lacking and is often manifested in economic and political discrimination.

The United States continues in its private and public diplomacy efforts to support political reform, economic growth and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Middle East. To reinforce our diplomatic efforts, the United States has also begun to sponsor programs that strengthen the role of independent journalists and trade unions, increase respect and safeguards for the rule of law, strengthen public participation in the political process, improve the status of women and promote a regional dialogue on democracy for members of NGOs and governments. The United States has introduced two sources of Arabic-language broadcasting in the region, Radio Sawa and al-Hurra Satellite Television, with the objectives of increasing access to unbiased news as well as promoting understanding of the United States.

MEPI, announced in December 2002, is a State Department initiative funding assistance in four separate areas relevant to democracy and human rights advancement in the Middle East: economic reform, business investment and private sector development, education, development of political pluralism, including independent parties, independent judiciaries, effective legislative bodies and strong civil society, all

committed to good governance and transparency with increased participation, and full and equal opportunities for women across all spheres of society. The United States is also continuing long-standing educational and cultural exchanges with Middle Eastern partners.

## **THE ARAB JUDICIAL FORUM**

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative launched its Arab judicial reform program in September 2003 at the Arab Judicial Forum, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain and organized by the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative. The three-day event brought together high-level government officials and non-governmental reformers active in the judicial arena from 15 Arab countries, the Palestinian Authority, the United Kingdom and the United States to discuss essential elements of sound judicial systems, identify common issues and develop plans for ongoing programs to address those issues. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor led the U.S. delegation to the forum, which centered on four key themes:

- **Judicial Selection, Ethics and Training.** Participants explored the various means by which judges are appointed, the manner in which nations ensure that judges act in an ethical manner and the need for and methods of training judges. In all of these areas, the participants considered how to ensure that judges' independence is preserved.
- **Judicial Role in Human Rights.** Conference participants reviewed the judiciary's potential to play a critical role in safeguarding human rights. In particular, participants discussed courts' obligations to treat all citizens equally and to protect the rights of those accused of criminal wrongdoing. The role of nongovernmental organizations in protecting human rights was also discussed.
- **Efficiency of Procedural Systems.** Throughout the world, nations are attempting to speed the efficiency and effectiveness of courts. Forum participants examined ways to streamline trials and review possible alternatives to trials, including mediation and arbitration.
- **Transnational Judicial and Legal cooperation.** The forum analyzed legal issues that reach across national borders such as international crime, money laundering and corruption, the enforcement of judgments in foreign countries and the possible benefits of uniform statutes on foreign investment.

## **ALGERIA**

Algeria is gradually emerging 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 Algerian Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in a few areas; however, important progress was made in some areas. Arbitrary arrests, prolonged incommunicado detentions, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, reported cases of torture and official impunity were problems. Short-term disappearances of prisoners deemed ♦ threats to national security ♦ reportedly increased. The Government imposed new restrictions on freedom of expression and demonstrated an increased willingness to implement them. Defamation laws and government actions restricted the relative freedom of the print media. However, the media continued to openly and regularly criticize the Government, despite government reprisals. The State of Emergency and improper application of laws continued to restrict citizens ♦ right to change their government, and the Family Code continued to limit women ♦s civil rights. Terrorist violence also deprived citizens of their fundamental right to security.

Over the last year, Algeria made some important progress in some areas. There were fewer reports of security force abuses. The incidence and severity of torture declined markedly. There were no substantiated reports of new disappearances implicating security forces. The Government created an "Ad Hoc Mechanism" to research cases of the missing and possibly pay indemnities to family members. Reform of the judiciary and legal codes began to be implemented. The Kabylie region saw little or no violence between ethnic Berbers and security forces and, by the end of the year, both parties had begun a dialogue. Also, the Government agreed to grant more visas to international human rights organizations.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Algeria is to press for the removal of the State of Emergency, end harassment of the media, conduct more human rights training within the security forces, implement judicial reforms and resolve the issue of the ♦ Disappeared. ♦ Throughout 2003 and early 2004, the United States engaged the Government and civil society organizations in dialogue and implemented assistance projects to encourage progress in these areas. U.S. officials conducted direct discussions of human rights and democracy issues with their Algerian counterparts. Secretary of State Powell, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner all visited Algiers to reinforce President Bush ♦s November call for greater freedom and democracy in the Middle East.

Because many of Algeria ♦s human rights abuses occurred within the justice system, the United States continued to emphasize progress in that sector. One multi-year program sought to bring together the efforts of the Government, lawyers, civil society activists and media in support of judicial independence and reform. The program placed seven Algerian journalists in internships with media outlets in the United States, helped the Algerian Judges' Association draft a Code of Ethics and conducted seminars on the U.S.

judicial system. A Commercial Law Development Program has helped encourage judicial reform against corruption and strengthen adherence to the rule of law.

The Disappeared remained one of Algeria's most serious human rights issues and, accordingly, the United States supported both governmental and non-governmental approaches to the problem. U.S. officials cited the need to bring justice to the missing in public statements. The Embassy established a dialogue with the head of the Ad Hoc Mechanism to help ensure its effectiveness. U.S. officials met with members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing the missing, and pressed them and the Government to combine and coordinate efforts. The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor awarded more than \$400,000 in grants to support 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.

The United States continued to actively promote free, fair and transparent electoral practices, especially in advance of Algeria's presidential elections in April 2004. The Secretary and other high-level officials stressed the importance of a level political playing field, open media coverage and a fair electoral process in meetings with government officials and public gatherings. Funding was provided for education and training on political party development, coalition-building, election monitoring and comparative electoral systems.

To help promote independent media, the Embassy worked daily with Algerian journalists to strengthen professional standards and encourage increased coverage of democracy and human rights issues. U.S. officials also raised specific cases of media harassment with the Algerian Government.

The United States placed a priority on professionalizing the police, working with the Government to support an effective shift away from the use of the military for internal law enforcement toward civilian police enforcement. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program also helped encourage increased respect for civilian control of the military and greater professionalism within the military and gendarmerie. IMET training focused on the subjects of military ethics, human rights, civilian control of the military, laws of war and the use of force. Funding for U.S.-based training of Algerian military officers increased dramatically during the year from less than \$30,000 in 2002 to almost \$600,000 in 2003. Training also included \$150,000 for English language materials for Algeria's military academies. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, military officers who participated in training in the United States were vetted for human rights abuses. Productive liaison between the Embassy and police entities increased, facilitating expanded training opportunities in the future.

The United States used diplomacy and assistance to champion the rights of women in Algeria. The Embassy expanded its contacts among women's advocates and pressed for greater women's political participation and changes to the 1984 Family Code in regular meetings with the Minister-Delegate for Women's Affairs and Family Issues and NGOs. High-level U.S. officials also raised these issues publicly during visits to Algiers. The Embassy partnered with two Algerian NGOs to sponsor a conference on Women's Political Participation in October.

In light of recent political unrest and violence in the Kabylie, the United States continued to monitor the region. Embassy officials visited the Kabylie region throughout the year to assess the conditions of the Berber minority and the status of its relationship with government authorities. U.S. officials also visited the Sahraoui refugee camps around Tindouf to assess living conditions of Western Saharan refugees.

The International Visitor program continued to reinforce U.S. human rights and democracy objectives by promoting new, up-and-coming leaders. During the year, 11 governmental and civic leaders participated in exchanges, acquiring first-hand exposure to democratic activists and practices in the United States. The Embassy hosted a speaker on human rights issues in October as part of a new "Distinguished American Speaker" series.

Finally, the Embassy improved its base of contacts among various religious groups over the year, strengthening its capacity to report on issues relating to religious freedom.

## **EGYPT**

In 1999, President Hosni Mubarak was reelected unopposed to a fourth six-year term in a national referendum. 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. While the Government introduced some potentially significant reforms in 2003, including the establishment of a National Human Rights Council and the abolition of one type of extraordinary court, the overall human rights situation remained poor.

The Government's human rights record remained poor and many serious problems remain; however, there were improvements in a few areas. The principal human rights problems were the continuation of the 1981 Emergency Law, trials of non-security cases in emergency courts, persistent reports of torture by police and state security officers, the use of administrative detention for indefinite periods and restrictions on religious freedom. 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.

Human rights and political reform were prominent on the bilateral diplomatic agenda during the year. Senior U.S. officials lobbied their Egyptian counterparts to lift the Emergency Law and, after its renewal, sought to limit its application only to extraordinary cases involving dangerous individuals and violent, extremist organizations. The United States also raised concerns about torture and urged the Egyptian Government to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture, which held sessions on Egypt in November 2002 in Geneva. The United States frequently raised concerns regarding the new law on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and pressed the Government to implement it in a flexible and liberal manner, specifically drawing attention to issues of registration and foreign funding. Specific cases of nonregistration were also raised in diplomatic contexts. Concerns about civil society development, political participation and basic political rights were also addressed in official meetings. U.S. officials met with Egyptian civil society leaders and activists to solicit their views on how the United States might use the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and other initiatives to support the reform process.

In his November 2003 address commemorating the National Endowment for Democracy's 20th anniversary, President Bush proclaimed Egypt's importance to the U.S. strategy to promote reform in the region when he said, "The great and proud nation of Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, and now should show the way toward democracy in the Middle East." Other senior U.S. officials have also urged Egypt to democratize and to strengthen respect for human rights.

The United States reviewed its democracy and governance programs during the year as part of a comprehensive assessment of its bilateral assistance to Egypt. Programs in 2003 and early 2004 focused particularly on justice sector reform, citizen participation with a special emphasis on gender equality, media independence and professionalism, and responsive local governance.

The eight-year, \$18.4 million Administration of Justice Support (AOJS) program neared completion, promoting increased transparency and public confidence in the courts. The program used two pilot commercial courts to introduce automated, streamlined administrative processes and training for judges and court staff. A follow-on AOJS II project will assist the Ministry of Justice in replicating the reformed and modernized court systems nationwide.

A five-year, \$500,000 criminal justice project with the Egyptian prosecutor general's office continued and featured a high profile conference in September attended by the Minister of Justice, the Public Prosecutor, the Speaker of the Parliament and other distinguished participants. The conference concluded with recommendations for legal reforms for which legislation is currently being developed. Under this same program, Egyptian participants visited the United States and interacted with U.S. federal judges.

A seven-year, \$32.5 million U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) grant continued, strengthening the institutional capacity of NGOs through assistance in the areas of internal governance, financial management, advocacy for citizens' interests and participation in civic action. This grant helped women, particularly in rural areas, obtain the basic civil records necessary to access government services, protect their legal rights, and register to vote.

In other efforts to strengthen civil society, the United States supported a conference in September that afforded 200 NGO activists from around the country a forum to address issues of institutional capacity, management and the regulatory environment. At the event, Egypt's Minister of Social Affairs publicly acknowledged, for the first time, the need for legal reforms to lessen constraints on NGOs and accord them greater freedoms. Other initiatives included a model U.S. Congress at Cairo University and civic education summer camps.

USAID continued to implement a \$5.2 million experimental program to promote responsive local government by fostering new relationships between the government and citizen groups in four target communities.

Several efforts promoted greater independence and professionalism in the media. A \$1 million project with international partners and Egyptian journalist groups placed 15 young Egyptian journalists in internship 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.

The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor awarded a grant to the American University in Cairo (AUC) to expand the impact of its formal degree program in International Human Rights law by developing professional and community outreach programs.

The Embassy continued to administer an interagency mechanism that awarded numerous small grants totaling \$600,000 to support local, grassroots initiatives. These included a regional conference on the rights of women in the Arab world, a tutoring and mentoring program for underprivileged girls, a workshop to train journalists and lawyers on human rights law and a civic education program to raise awareness of the rights of disabled citizens. The 2003 International Visitor program included exchanges on subjects relating to human rights, civil society, good governance and women's issues.

The United States strongly supported MEPI pillars in Egypt. Egyptians participated in the Arab Judicial Forum and the Women in Law Program in Jordan, both MEPI regional initiatives. The Embassy maintained contact with the women parliamentarians who visited the United States in November 2002, and sponsored two participants in the MEPI Young Ambassadors Program and hosted the follow-up conference in January



2004. MEPI also worked with a local NGO to host the first session of the Arab Women's Forum in May 2003, which will be expanded in 2004.

The Embassy urged the Government to grant due process of law to all citizens and raised specific concerns about the process for those apparently arrested because of their sexual orientation. Concerns about the status of Egypt's Christians and other religious minorities were also raised, and the Embassy maintained excellent relations with representatives of Egypt's various religious communities. Embassy officers monitored some trials in cases involving human rights principles.

## 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. Deeply flawed parliamentary elections, in which the Government forbade virtually all of the country's reformists from running, were held on February 20, 2004. The Government's poor human rights record worsened in 2003 and early 2004, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Summary executions, disappearances, extremist vigilantism, widespread use of torture and other degrading treatment remained problems. In 2003, a Canadian citizen photographer died from injuries sustained while in government custody, the Government beat student protesters and arrested thousands more, and also arrested several journalists and banned reformist publications. 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. The Government continued to severely restrict worker rights, including freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively.

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, supporting the continuing efforts of the Iranian people to institute greater freedoms and increase political participation in Iran, pushing for resolutions criticizing Iran's human rights policies at the United Nations and other international forums, and publicly highlighting 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 press the Iranian Government to stop abusing its citizens' human rights.

In Fall 2003, 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 58th Plenary, sending an important signal to the Iranian people that the international community recognizes their suffering, and to the Iranian Government that dialogue on human rights is no substitute for concrete action to improve its record.

Calling for Iran to stop abusing its citizens' human rights is central to the U.S. overall policy approach and reflected in all public statements. President Bush and senior-level U.S. officials have repeatedly expressed their support for the Iranian people in their quest for freedom, democracy and a more transparent and accountable government, and will continue to do so. U.S. representatives regularly meet with members of various groups suffering human rights abuses in Iran. Their complaints are 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. Secretary Powell designated Iran as a 'Country of Particular Concern' for the fifth year in a row, in accordance with guidelines set out in the International Religious Freedom Act.

Iran is currently ineligible for most official programmatic assistance from the United States pursuant to U.S. law. However, the Voice of America supports broadcasts into Iran. The United States also supports a website in Persian to speak directly to the Iranian people about U.S. policy, and Radio Farda, which operates 24 hours a day to keep the flow of information open. In response to the December 26, 2003 earthquake in Bam, Iran, in which more than 40,000 were killed, the United States quickly assembled and deployed a response team to the scene through the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. The United States has waived relevant sanctions for a period of six months for the express purpose of aiding humanitarian response to the disaster.

## **IRAQ**

Iraq's human rights record prior to the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in April 2003 was extremely poor. The Hussein regime regularly committed serious human rights abuses. Citizens had neither the right nor ability to change the government, and elections were neither free nor fair. The regime habitually and summarily executed alleged political opponents and leaders of the Shi'a religious community. The Government arbitrarily executed people because of ethnic or religious associations, political views and even as part of an effort to reduce prison populations. Until its fall, the regime was responsible for the disappearance, torture and killing of persons suspected or related to persons suspected of opposition politics, economic crimes, military desertion and a variety of other activities. By the end of 2003, approximately 250 mass graves had been reported in Iraq and some 50 had been confirmed, many relating to five major atrocities perpetrated by Saddam Hussein's regime. Preliminary reports estimate that the graves may hold the remains of as many as 300,000 victims.

A U.S.-led Coalition removed the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein in April 2003. Pursuant to language in UN Security Council Resolution 1511, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was established to administer Iraq until an internationally recognized, representative Iraqi government is established and assumes responsibility. The CPA appointed the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), a broadly representative body of 25 Iraqis. The IGC has coordinated with the CPA to oversee the rehabilitation of Iraqi governing institutions and establish policy related to Iraq's transition to democracy.

Following the liberation of Iraq and the establishment of the CPA, the United States worked through the CPA in collaboration with Iraqis, foreign governments and international organizations to address the effects of decades of political repression and human rights violations. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy has promoted Iraqi efforts to account for past atrocities, prevent future human rights abuses and support institutions conducive to a successful transition to democracy.

The CPA worked with Iraqis to set up the new Iraqi Human Rights Ministry. The Ministry is charged with organizing policy and coordinating assistance in support of a robust effort to account for crimes under the previous regime and prevent future human rights abuses. In collaboration with the Ministry and specialists from the United Kingdom, the United States provided funding and guidance to develop a strategy to uncover mass graves, including forensic training and equipment for local communities and advocacy programs to help families of victims. The United States also helped secure the contributions of Danish, Finnish, Dutch and Swedish forensic and logistical experts. The United States organized a project to collect, preserve and systematize documentation on atrocities perpetrated by the former regime. These efforts will support the future work of the Iraq Special Tribunal, an institution created by the IGC to try former regime members accused of crimes against humanity.

With start-up funding from the Government of the Netherlands, the United States helped establish an Iraqi National Bureau of Missing Persons. The United States is also working with Iraqis to create a mechanism to address property claims and restitution issues, launch human rights education in civil society and schools, and introduce human rights training for Iraqi police recruits and employees of other government ministries and agencies.

To support Iraqi efforts to promote human rights at the grassroots level, the United States has provided training and funding to strengthen and organize hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The United States helped create an independent national network of human rights organizations and set up government-sponsored human rights centers at the provincial level to provide information on human rights and register claims and complaints. The United States provided basic infrastructure and support to local human rights and democracy education and training initiatives, and developed media programs to support them.

The United States played a leading role in supporting Iraqi efforts to revive justice and the rule of law. Iraqis consulted U.S. experts on the creation of the Iraqi Special Tribunal. Additionally, the United States facilitated consultations by international experts and Iraqis on transitional justice and truth commissions. The United States provided guidance and support to the new Ministry of Justice and is helping to establish an independent judiciary system. The United States helped draft and revise legislation affecting basic rights, for example on NGOs, judicial procedures and penal codes, and placed a priority on training Iraqi police to provide security and promote law and order in a manner consistent with international human rights standards and democratic practice.

The United States also contributed to multilateral efforts aimed at reintegrating Iraq into the international community and ensuring its compliance with international human rights standards. These included facilitating IGC contacts with foreign governments and promoting Iraq's adoption of international conventions, including those against torture. The United States helped arrange to place a permanent Iraqi Special Representative on Human Rights at the UN, successfully advocated seating the Iraqi delegation at the UN General Assembly and successfully lobbied for the participation of an Iraqi delegation in the 60th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2004.

The United States has promoted participatory, representative and accountable government at the local level. Accordingly, the United States helped establish interim councils in 18 governorates, 78 cities, 54 districts, 48 sub-districts and 138 neighborhoods and provided assistance to promote democratic practices within these councils and among Iraqi communities more broadly. Under the U.S. Agency for International Development's Community Action Program (CAP), Iraqi community associations developed and implemented projects that gave local citizens a direct role in defining and addressing local priorities. CAP projects included repair to local sewage systems and roads, rehabilitation of schools and renovation of health clinics, and placed a priority on the participation of women, youth and minority groups.

Civic Education Programs (CEP) also promoted democratization and civil society development. CEP 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. More than 1,060 rapid response grants worth in excess of \$50 million were also awarded to increase Iraqi participation in local government decision-making.

The United States provided support to Iraqi media, training journalists to fulfill the functions of information, education and oversight that characterize a professional, independent press. The United States also funded media outlets that reported news in a fair and unbiased fashion, including Al Sabah radio and IMN/Al Iraqiya TV.

The United States has dedicated considerable effort to ensuring religious freedom in Iraq. Since the fall of the Ba'ath regime, religious rights of the people are unrestricted. The Shi'a community is able to freely and openly engage in once forbidden religious expression, and Shi'a pilgrims from other countries are finally permitted to visit Iraq's holy sites. President Bush met with representatives of the IGC and discussed their mutual desire to see constitutional protections for minority rights and freedom of religion.

On June 30, 2004, CPA will pass authority to an Interim Government that will guide Iraq toward elections for a Transitional National Assembly and a process for drafting a permanent constitution. Iraqis drafted a Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) to govern the period between the June 30 handover of authority and the election of a representative government under a permanent constitution. The United States consulted with Iraqis on the TAL to support its conformity with international human rights language and standards of due process. The TAL accords a bill of 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 United States placed a high priority on promoting equality for women in Iraq and supported this goal through policy and programming initiatives. Three women were named to the Governing Council, and women gained seats on councils at the city, district and provincial levels. U.S. officials, including President Bush, met with Iraqi women in the United States and Iraq. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky participated in the Voice of Women in Iraq conference on July 9, 2003. The State Department helped send a delegation of Iraqi women to the June 2003 Global Summit of Women conference in Morocco and to the 48th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. On March 8, 2004, Secretary of State Powell announced two new initiatives aimed at supporting women in Iraq. The first, a \$10 million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, will provide Iraqi women with training and education in the skills and practices of democratic public life. The second, the U.S.-Iraqi Women's Network, is a public-private partnership that will bring Iraqi NGO representatives and business leaders together with American counterparts to empower them to participate in the political and economic life of their country. The IGC included a provision in the TAL calling for the electoral law to be crafted in such a way to support a goal of at least 25 percent women in the Transitional National Assembly.

A new Ministry of Labor was created with U.S. guidance and assistance to promote and protect workers' rights and opportunities. The United States helped facilitate agreements with the International Labor Organization to reinstate Iraq as a member with full voting rights. The United States also consulted on a new draft labor code to ensure protection of worker rights in accordance with internationally recognized labor standards.

U.S. agencies acted to prevent human trafficking in Iraq. The State Department distributed information about trafficking in persons to advisors to Iraq in the Department of Defense, CPA and U.S. military police, and implemented a zero-tolerance policy with regard to the involvement of U.S. personnel in trafficking and prostitution. U.S. civilian police recruited for service in Iraq also received training to combat trafficking and other human rights abuses. U.S. officials consulted with the Ministry of Justice on a model anti-trafficking law and provided the example of U.S. legislation to ensure that the Iraqi criminal justice system addresses trafficking offenses. An anti-trafficking plan was developed for the new government that included relevant international conventions and documents and extensive educational materials were prepared and distributed to the general public to promote awareness of the crime and recommend steps to prevent and report it.

## **JORDAN**

Although many problems remained, the Government of Jordan's respect for human rights improved in some areas during the year. The June parliamentary and July municipal elections were generally considered free and fair. King Abdullah established official institutions to address human rights, and specifically charged the new Government appointed in October with promoting human rights and political development. Public debate on major policy issues had increased by year's end. There was a lack of progress, however, regarding judicial independence and violations of due process rights. Members of the security forces continued to commit human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention and torture. While citizens participated in the political process through their elected representatives to Parliament, they did not have the right to change their government. Freedoms of assembly, association and the media were restricted. Academicians reported government actions that restricted their freedom, and societal discrimination against and restrictions on the rights of women continued to be problems.

Addressing a wide range of continuing problems, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy promotes the rule of law and legal reform, civil society development, popular 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 Embassy arranged in-kind donations to the library of the quasi-independent National Center for Human Rights and developed a cooperative relationship with the Human Rights Directorate recently set up in 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, the police,

military and the National Center for Human Rights. More than half of the professional military education provided in the United States to Jordanian personnel included a human rights component.

The United States was directly involved in promoting the rule of law and legal reform. Twenty-four Shari'a law faculty members participated in International Visitor programs on religious tolerance and religion and the law. Fifteen judges participated in a 10-day mediation and case management workshop in the United States that included visits to different courts in California. The Embassy continued to work with the Ministry of Justice to extend case management and mediation reforms to increasing numbers of courts and personnel and, potentially, to implement criminal justice reforms.

The United States promoted broader participation in the political process, particularly among women. During the year, about 60 women parliamentary candidates participated in U.S. programs that afforded them individual consultation and training on campaign techniques and public relations. The Embassy provided orientation and training on parliamentary procedure and human rights issues to members of a women's network that includes the six new parliamentarians and many of the women who ran unsuccessfully. The Embassy also funded a campaign phone center for one month prior to the parliamentary elections to help women candidates contact voters.

The United States sought to promote media independence and professionalism through a workshop cosponsored by an American non-governmental organization and a Jordanian local partner that focused particularly on strengthening the skills of women journalists. The Embassy conducted three workshops for journalists on press freedom, journalistic responsibility and election coverage.

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative supported a pilot Arab Civitas program to introduce civic education and human rights awareness in 21 government schools. An educational initiative linking 52 Jordanian public and private schools with American counterparts enabled students to exchange ideas and information on human rights. In September, 20 students participated in a civic awareness and student leadership program in several cities throughout the United States. In December, the Embassy hosted a delegation from the American Council of Young Political Leaders to interact with civic-minded Jordanian youth and professionals. It funded and produced Arabic translations of the book series ♦Foundations of Democracy. ♦

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 U.S. Agency for International Development's assistance program was especially structured to assist women and the sometimes marginalized poor and rural populations. A State Department grant supported the efforts of local women's groups to advocate on behalf of their needs and rights.

The United States maintained dialogue with key actors in the labor sector, including union leaders, International Labor Organization officials, industrial park managers, factory owners and government representatives. There was a special focus on the Qualified Industrial Zones, where labor conditions continued to be better than average. Three union leaders traveled to the United States in January on a Citizen Exchange Program that familiarized them with the American labor movement and provided them with an opportunity to network. On several occasions U.S. officials discussed with the Government implementation of Jordan's international commitments to fight child labor and trafficking.

## **KUWAIT**

Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate. The Constitution provides for an elected National Assembly; however, it permits the Amir to suspend its provisions by decree. National Assembly elections held in July 2003 were generally free and fair; however, there were some credible reports of government and opposition vote buying. Although the Government's respect for human rights has improved over the last decade, serious problems remain. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. Women, who comprise slightly more than half the citizen population, do not have the right to vote or seek election to the National Assembly. Some police and members of the security forces abused detainees during interrogation. The judiciary remained subject to government influence. The Government placed some limits on freedoms of speech, assembly, association, religion and movement. Violence and discrimination against women, especially non-citizens, persisted, and judicial authorities discriminated against non-citizens, especially foreign laborers. Some underage foreign boys were used as jockeys in camel races. Some domestic servants and unskilled foreign laborers faced abuse and worked under conditions that constituted indentured servitude. As the State Department reported in the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report, the Government started to make significant efforts to combat trafficking in persons, but it did not meet the report's minimum standards for eliminating trafficking in persons. The Government restricted worker rights to organize and bargain collectively and form unions. Foreign workers suffered from the lack of a minimum wage in the private sector and weak government enforcement of some Labor Law provisions. As of late February 2004, a new draft Labor Law was under parliamentary review.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Kuwait targets a wide range of critical issues, including strengthening Kuwait's democratic and civil society institutions and its protections for workers, empowering women, combating trafficking in persons and improving the working conditions of domestic servants and foreign laborers. The Embassy uses the various programming tools available to the Public Affairs Section and funding through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights in Kuwait. U.S. diplomatic, programming and advocacy efforts resulted in some positive changes to Kuwait's overall human rights situation during the year. In early 2004, for example, the Ministry of Interior adopted a number of new measures to improve the conditions for



domestic servants. The Embassy actively engages government officials, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society groups at all levels to advance dialogue and debate on key human rights concerns, particularly female suffrage and equal protection under the law for foreign laborers. The increased number of Congressional delegations transiting Kuwait en route to Iraq in 2003 and 2004 is also strengthening the ability to sustain this dialogue. In addition to the regular bilateral dialogue the Embassy maintains with government officials, Embassy officials frequently attend the influential evening meetings that private Kuwaitis host in their homes ("diwanias") to discuss current events and promote awareness and understanding of U.S. human rights and democratic values.

The Embassy actively encourages positive debate on the role and status of women in Kuwaiti society and the impact of women's disenfranchisement on their basic rights and protections. The Embassy also assists women's rights activists to develop effective advocacy and political action strategies. As part of these efforts, the Embassy sent three Kuwaiti women to Amman, Jordan, in February 2004 to participate in a MEPI-funded workshop hosted by the Government of Jordan entitled "Women and the Law ♦ A Regional Dialogue: Supporting Voices of Change." Participants addressed and discussed challenges facing women in the legal and judicial system, and aspects of law that directly impact women in the region. Kuwait also participated in a U.S.-sponsored regional program to train women activists working to develop and implement an effective strategy for obtaining political rights for women, including the right to vote and run for elected office.

Women ♦s rights activists believe apathy and disinterest among many Kuwaiti women are key factors inhibiting a more vibrant suffrage movement. Activists hope to highlight ways in which women are economically and legally disadvantaged as a result of their disenfranchisement, in order to galvanize broader societal support for political reform. The Embassy supported these grassroots civil society efforts through various programs and exchanges during the year. In May 2003, the Embassy sent an influential Kuwaiti male businessman and supporter of women's rights to the United States to participate in a "Women as Leaders in the Public and Private Sectors" project to study American women's experiences in the U.S. political process. His participation was an integral part of embassy efforts to encourage Kuwaiti men to support women's political rights ♦ a challenge in Kuwait's patriarchal society. Using a State Department Near East Affairs Democracy Small Grant, the Embassy is sponsoring a gender budgeting study to be carried out by a local NGO. The study will entail a gender-sensitive analysis of the most recent government budget to highlight gender inequity in government spending. In a related initiative, the Embassy brought a U.S. speaker to Kuwait in March 2004 to provide advocacy and political action campaign training to another local NGO planning to challenge an inequitable social allowance law that discriminates against women and children.

Parliamentary institutional and capacity building is another key component of the Embassy's strategy to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Kuwait. The Embassy is working with the Parliament to encourage broader understanding of U.S. human rights and democratic values. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section has also agreed with Kuwait's National Assembly to establish a permanent "American Studies Corner" in the National Assembly's library in 2004 to provide comprehensive resource information to parliamentarians on U.S. history, law, political system and business environment, including an encyclopedia of U.S. law and CD-ROM information.

The Embassy continues its longstanding efforts to strengthen Kuwait's media and to promote more responsible journalism. The Public Affairs Section sent a young Kuwaiti female journalist to the United States in 2003 on an International Visitor program for "Young Professional Journalists." The Embassy is also organizing a workshop for local print media representatives in 2004 on accurate, ethical and balanced reporting.

The United States raises religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy actively encourages the Government to address the concerns of religious leaders, such as overcrowding, lack of worship space and inadequate staffing. Embassy officials meet regularly with recognized Sunni, Shi'a and Christian groups and representatives of various unrecognized faiths to hear their concerns and monitor progress on religious freedom issues.

The Embassy and senior State Department officials consistently urged the Government to strengthen legal and regulatory measures to combat human trafficking. The Ambassador hosted a roundtable discussion on trafficking in May 2003 comprising embassy officials, labor attachés and other diplomatic representatives from the major source country embassies to share ideas and propose strategies to address continued abuses. Embassy officials worked throughout the year to encourage the Government to improve protections for the estimated 400,000 to 450,000 domestic servants who remained excluded from the Labor Law, strengthen enforcement of regulations banning the employment of minors as camel jockeys and vigorously investigate incidents of human trafficking.

The Embassy also focused on labor rights and working conditions for foreign workers, and encouraged the Government to reform its outdated Labor Law to conform more closely to internationally recognized labor standards. The Embassy met regularly with government officials at all levels to promote awareness of labor problems and urge improvements in the status and treatment of foreign workers, particularly domestic servants. In January 2004, embassy officials attended the first-ever public seminar held in Kuwait hosted by a local NGO to address the treatment of foreign workers, particularly domestic servants. The seminar brought together for the first time members of the Government, parliament, labor unions and NGOs to discuss these labor concerns. Also in January 2004, the Embassy organized a roundtable discussion on

domestic worker rights with embassy labor officials from major source countries. The event has encouraged source country embassy labor officials to meet more regularly, share experiences and present their labor concerns to the Government. The Embassy maintained a close working relationship with NGOs and domestic and international labor groups, especially the International Labor Organization, to monitor labor conditions and investigate incidents of abuse.

## **LEBANON**

The Government of Lebanon's overall human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. The right of citizens to change their government remained significantly restricted by the lack of complete government control over parts of the country, shortcomings in the electoral system, the flawed 2000 elections and Syrian influence. Members of the security forces used excessive force and tortured and abused some detainees. Prison conditions remained poor. Government abuses also included the arbitrary arrest and detention of persons who were critical of government policies. The courts were subject to political pressure, and the Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights and continued surveillance of political activities. The Government limited press and media freedom. The Government continued to restrict freedom of assembly and imposed some limits on freedom of association, movement and religion. Violence and discrimination against women, child labor and the mistreatment of foreign domestic servants remained problems.

The U.S. strategy to promote human rights and democracy consists of both diplomacy and programs to strengthen civil society, the rule of law, press freedom, judicial independence and to combat trafficking in persons. The United States engaged the President of Lebanon, the Prime Minister and the Justice Minister on these issues. Embassy officials also met regularly with non-governmental organizations and the Beirut Bar Association to monitor human rights developments. The Embassy cooperated with the Bar and the Institute of Judicial Studies to organize two seminars by a visiting American judge on the rule of law and the use of arbitration and alternative methods to resolve disputes. Embassy officials also attended press conferences organized by human rights organizations and trials involving principles and advocacy of human rights and democracy.

The 2003 and 2004 International Visitor program reinforced U.S. human rights and democracy objectives. Eight community members and government officials participated in exchanges on such topics as democracy, women's empowerment, young leaders, media, student leadership and trafficking.

Assistance programs sought to promote participatory and accountable government and strengthen civil society institutions. The Transparency and Accountability Grants program, funded through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative awarded 59 grants of approximately \$25,000 each to local civil society initiatives

to increase transparency and accountability in Lebanon's public and private sectors. An additional \$4 million supported a program in the Democracy and Governance portfolio to strengthen the delivery of government services to citizens and municipalities. Projects under these programs addressed such subjects as transparent government transactions, professional ethics and youth education, and reached more than 1,000 municipality presidents, vice presidents and key employees. More effective municipal governance helped ensure citizens' equal access to services, regardless of their religion, thereby promoting reconciliation among communities and strengthening popular confidence in government.

The United States initiated a regional program based in Beirut to strengthen the management and commercial base of independent media throughout the region.

The United States also conducted programs to promote women's political participation in advance of 2004 municipal and 2005 parliamentary elections.

To address trafficking in persons, the United States funded a \$59,000 program for judges-in-training and continuing education for sitting judges to identify and successfully convict traffickers. A grant of \$330,000 helped operate a safe house for the protection of victims of trafficking.

## **LIBYA**

Libya has a history of summary executions, disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention of persons, many of whom remain incommunicado, widespread use of torture and other degrading treatment, restricted freedoms of speech, assembly, press and expression, and impunity. The Government controls the judiciary, citizens do not have the right to a fair public trial or to be represented by legal counsel, and the establishment of independent human rights organizations is prohibited. Women and religious and ethnic minorities also continue to face violence and discrimination. These and many other problems contribute to Libya's extremely poor human rights record. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Libya centers on concrete, verifiable and sustained improvement in Libya's destructive policies.

Although U.S. ties to Libya remain at a low level, Libya's December 19, 2003 commitment to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs and Missile Control Technology Regime (MCTR)-class missiles has cleared a path for better relations. For the first time since 1980, American diplomats are based in Tripoli. The U.S. strategy to encourage the Libyan Government to stop abusing its citizens' human rights is multi-faceted and ongoing. Libya remains on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list and is consequently ineligible for assistance from the United States.

U.S. diplomacy played a central part in Libya's move to address its UN Security Council obligations related to the bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. On August 15, 2003, Libya submitted a

letter to the President of the UN Security Council in which it accepted responsibility for the actions of its officials in connection with the bombing, arranged to pay appropriate compensation to the families of the victims, renounced terrorism and pledged to cooperate with future requests for information about the case. At various times, the United States reiterated the need for Libya to abandon its WMD programs and take steps to improve its human rights record. During late 2003, the Qadhafi Foundation, under the direction of Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi, conducted a number of prison inspections and went on record about the need to improve prison conditions in Libya. On December 19, 2003, Libya announced that it would abandon its WMD and MCTR-class missile programs. In February 2004, representatives from Amnesty International were invited to Libya and met with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice.

On February 6, 2004, the United States held the first bilateral talks with Libya, opening a broad political dialogue that includes human rights issues. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns visited Libya in March. Representatives of the United States regularly met with members of various groups suffering from human rights abuses in Libya. Their complaints were raised with other governments and were included in the State Department's annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Libya and the International Religious Freedom Report.

## **MOROCCO**

Although there was important progress in some areas, Morocco's human rights record remained poor in other areas. Local elections in September were more transparent and fair than those in the past. Bold changes to the family status code, or moudawana, which Parliament passed in January 2004, significantly increased the rights of women and children in areas such as marriage, property rights and inheritance. The King inaugurated a non-judicial Truth and Justice Commission to examine thousands of cases of alleged human rights abuses during the reign of Hassan II and consider requests for indemnification. The Government signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Committee of the Red Cross to introduce human rights training in schools. Parliament passed a new labor code that respects workers' rights to form unions and engage in collectively bargaining.

Problems remained however, including deaths in police custody and the detention of several thousand people for possible involvement with terrorist groups following terrorist attacks in Casablanca in May. International human rights groups reported a sharp rise in the number of cases of torture and ill-treatment over the last two years. Impunity remained a problem. Freedom of the press was restricted. Seven journalists were sentenced to prison, most of them under the new anti-terrorism law, and several publications were banned for defaming the monarchy or violating the new anti-terrorism law. Two journalists were imprisoned, but all journalists were pardoned in January 2004. Police forcibly dispersed several demonstrations during the year. While there were some well-publicized prosecutions for abuses by

security forces, the failure to prosecute other cases raised questions about the Government's commitment to resolving the problem. The judiciary remained subject to government influence and corruption, and prison conditions were poor. Child labor remained a serious problem, and the Government did not act forcefully to end the illegal employment of child maids.

The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy addresses many of Morocco's worst abuses. The Embassy-sponsored interagency Democracy Working Group was key to developing this portfolio, convening regularly in Rabat to consult on strategy and coordinate U.S. assistance.

During 2003 and early 2004, U.S. officials representing many federal agencies contributed to fostering progress in human rights in Morocco. In several high-level visits, U.S. diplomats applauded Morocco's achievements while conveying the importance of sustaining progress in human rights and political reform. Secretary of State Powell participated in a roundtable with 35 community and youth activists during his two-day stop in Morocco in December. He expressed strong U.S. commitment to seeing press freedom flourish and made interventions on behalf of two detained Moroccan journalists. An Associate Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development met with officials of the Moroccan Government to develop a strategy to strengthen the Parliament, increase government transparency and improve local government performance. Embassy officials regularly spoke to high-level Moroccan officials urging them to respect the rights of the media, release imprisoned journalists, conduct honest elections and, in general, sustain forward momentum for reform. They also frequently raised the problems of child maids, child labor and trafficking in persons, which are U.S. priorities. The Embassy maintained regular contact with many Moroccan non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights activists and Jewish and Berber community leaders in an effort to monitor domestic developments and identify ways to advance reform. Embassy officials met with Sahrawi human rights activists, including several released from prison, in January 2004. Visiting Congressional delegations also advanced U.S. democracy and human rights objectives. Members of Congress urged the Government to free imprisoned journalists, encouraged Moroccan officials to fight corruption and pressed for greater transparency and accountability in the public and private sectors.

The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor helped promote due process in the judicial system through a grant that enabled a coalition of government officials, lawmakers, attorneys and independent activists and groups to advocate reform of Morocco's penal procedure code. Seventy percent of the coalition's recommendations were reflected in the new Code. Additional funding helped train Moroccan prosecutors and lawyers to understand and implement the legislation.

Many activities sought to strengthen popular participation and public confidence in the political system. U.S.-funded training programs promoted political party development at the local and national levels,

strengthened Parliament and the representative functions of individual lawmakers, imparted opinion and social research skills to political parties and advocacy groups and facilitated voter registration and nonpartisan citizen monitoring of elections. Programs also encouraged professional electoral conduct and provided specialized training for women.

Assistance under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program helped address concerns relating to Morocco's security forces. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, 100 Moroccan military officers received U.S.-based IMET training in the rule of law and human rights.

To promote full democracy in Morocco, the United States dedicated considerable efforts to strengthening women's legal status and promoting women's participation in the political process. In his November 6 speech on freedom in the Middle East, President Bush stated, "Morocco has a diverse new parliament; King Mohammed has urged it to extend the rights to women. Here is how His Majesty explained his reforms to parliament: "How can society achieve progress while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice, violence and marginalization, notwithstanding the dignity and justice granted to them by our glorious religion?" The King of Morocco is correct: The future of Muslim nations will be better for all with the full participation of women. In fact, U.S. grants supported projects to promote advocacy and legal literacy among rural women and to combat illiteracy among women and girls. After the announcement of the reform of the family code, small grants helped local organizations raise popular awareness of women's new rights.

The United States also supported several programs to reinforce diplomacy on issues relating to child labor. These included a \$3 million initiative to broaden school access for child workers and dropouts and a State Department grant that funded a television and radio campaign addressed to parents and employers discouraging child labor. The U.S. Department of Labor awarded a \$250,000 Community-based Innovation to Reduce Child Labor through Education grant to a Moroccan NGO to provide educational alternatives to poor rural children who work on farms instead of attending school. The Office of Defense Cooperation began construction of six dormitories in rural Morocco for girls who would not otherwise attend school because of the need to travel overnight from their homes to reach their classes.

The United States also supported workers' rights more broadly, providing a grant of \$1.52 million to the International Labor Organization to begin a dialogue project to improve labor management relations, reduce the number of strikes and inform workers and employers about their respective rights and responsibilities under the new Labor Code.

The Democracy Working Group responded to the need to promote greater tolerance in the wake of the May 16 bombing by providing eight small grants to Moroccan NGOs to conduct public campaigns against extremism, bias and stereotypes.

The International Visitor (IV) program and other outreach efforts reinforced U.S. democracy and human rights objectives. Approximately 19 Moroccans participated in IV exchanges on subjects related to free press, labor and child trafficking, and children's and women's rights. In addition, the Embassy provided funding enabling four women to attend a leadership training program for Arab women sponsored by the State Department in partnership with the Arab Women's Council Research and Education Fund. A State Department grant also enabled ten women to travel to the United States to attend an NGO-sponsored leadership training program. The Minister of Justice and President of the Supreme Court participated in the Arab Judicial Forum and five women's advocates participated in the Women in Law Program. Both were regional initiatives funded through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy without elected representative institutions or political parties. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Security forces continued to torture and 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. The Government infringed upon privacy rights and continued to restrict freedom of speech and the press, although there has been an increase in press freedom over a series of years. 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 worker rights continued. The Government announced in October 2003 that it would hold the first municipal elections within one year. The Government met with organized groups of reform advocates and in public statements committed to political, economic and social reforms. The Government established a National Dialogue Center to address differences between different Muslim traditions in the country. There was an increase in press freedom, with open discussion of previously taboo subjects, and numerous foreign journalists were permitted to report freely; however, journalists were also sanctioned. In 2003, the Government permitted the first visit of an international human rights organization and held its first human rights conference. In early March 2004, the Government officially approved the country's first human rights association.

The United States addresses 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 worker rights, raising concerns about human rights violations when they occur, urging the Government to promote greater religious tolerance and supporting on-going reform efforts.

During his November 6 speech commemorating the National Endowment for Democracy's twentieth anniversary, President Bush said, "The Saudi Government is taking first steps toward reform, including a plan for gradual introduction of elections. By giving the Saudi people a greater role in their own society, the Saudi Government can demonstrate true leadership in the region."

U.S. officials routinely highlight the need to improve human rights conditions. The Embassy welcomed the visit of Human Rights Watch to the Kingdom and has urged the Government to continue to allow non-governmental organization (NGO) involvement on human rights cases. U.S. officials raise concerns with the Government when violations of human rights occur, and have encouraged the Government to finalize its work on establishing a non-governmental human rights commission. The Embassy addresses these issues at all levels of government and the Ambassador has raised these issues with senior government officials. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner visited Saudi Arabia in July 2003, and raised concerns about political reform and human rights.

The United States encourages and promotes freedom of the press in a number of ways. During 2003, the Embassy brought six Saudi reporters (three women and three men) to the United States on programs related to journalism. The Public Affairs Office organized a training workshop for women journalists including sessions on responsible journalism, investigative reporting and writing. The Embassy regularly held roundtable discussions with journalists in Riyadh and Jeddah in order to provide an opportunity for candid exchange. The Public Affairs Office expanded its outreach program to Saudi editors to encourage them to expand their coverage of human rights issues.

Using the International Visitor Program, the Embassy sponsored 15 individuals to go to the United States for programs, including leadership studies. Due to security concerns in Saudi Arabia during 2003, the Embassy was unable to conduct major projects in the Kingdom, but utilized the Fulbright program to nominate four Saudis to travel to the United States and bring three American scholars to Saudi Arabia. The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is the Administration's primary mechanism to support a forward strategy for freedom in the Middle East. Representatives from the Government and private sector in Saudi Arabia have participated in several MEPI regional programs, including forums on judicial reform and women and the law. Saudis also participated in Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor-sponsored training for NGOs on political participation, political party development, women and media in Yemen, and for journalists in the Gulf. The Embassy plans to expand its work with MEPI and other U.S.

programs to promote human rights and promote democracy in the coming year to support the Government's announcement of municipal elections.

In Fiscal Year 2003 the United States provided \$25,000 in International Military Education and Training assistance for the Saudi military. The program increases awareness of international norms of human rights and fosters greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military and the rule of law. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Defense Attach's Office worked closely with the Ministry of Defense to vet military units for U.S. training and checked candidates with other embassy officers.

The United States encourages Saudi officials to honor the Government's public commitment to permit private religious worship by non-Muslims, eliminate discrimination against all religious minorities and promote tolerance toward non-Muslims. U.S. officials also continue to press the connection between religious intolerance and terrorism. The Ambassador called for increased respect for religious minorities in the country. 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. Senior embassy officers and official visitors called on the Government to enforce its public commitment to allow private religious practice and respect the rights of Muslims who do not follow the Salafi tradition of Islam. The Ambassador protested the raids on private homes and detention of Christian worshippers in Riyadh, contributing to the successful release of several Christian detainees. In addition, embassy officers met with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials at various other times during the year on matters pertaining to religious freedom.

To address the problem of trafficking in persons and worker rights, at the Embassy's urging the Saudi Government has implemented programs to inform incoming workers of their rights and recourse in response to abuse when they receive visas to travel to Saudi Arabia and upon arrival. The United States also urges the Government to promote public awareness on issues relating to domestic servants, and it is taking steps to do so. Finally, the United States has discussed long-term means of improving the legal rights of foreign laborers under Saudi labor law. Through engagement with Saudi officials, the Embassy has advocated protection for foreign workers under the law and encouraged the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. The United States is also encouraging NGO and private involvement and increasing public affairs efforts to highlight the dangers and vulnerabilities of trafficking in persons. Saudi officials have participated in International Visitor programs to the United States on trafficking in persons.

## **SYRIA**

Syria's human rights record is poor; the Government uses its vast unchecked powers to prevent organized political opposition and severely limits civil society activities and anti-government manifestations. Hopes

for a more open political life, based on the public statements of President Bashar al-Asad, were stymied by the Government's continued repression of civil society groups in 2003 and early 2004, including the arrest of 14 intellectuals in Aleppo for attending a lecture, the mass arrest of suspected Islamists in Aleppo, Zabadani and Damascus, and the suppression of the stateless Kurdish minority. In President Bush's November 6 speech commemorating the National Endowment for Democracy's twentieth anniversary, he stated, "Dictators in Iraq and Syria promised the restoration of national honor, a return to ancient glories. They've left instead a legacy of torture, oppression, misery and ruin." Syria's presence on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism disqualifies it from receiving economic assistance from the United States.

Because of limitations on providing assistance to Syria, the United States relied heavily on diplomacy to advance human rights and democracy. U.S. officials emphasized the importance of freedom of association, speech and the press and respect for human rights in meetings with Syrian officials and during high level visits, and the Embassy established an ongoing dialogue with Syrian officials on those subjects. The Embassy also participated actively in a human rights monitoring group involving other foreign missions in Damascus that regularly exchanged information on the situation in Syria and coordinated responses and programs. The group monitors trials, makes demarches to the Syrian Government and brings high profile human rights cases to the attention of Syrian officials. The United States maintained contact with Syrian and expatriate human rights and civil society advocates, on occasion convening them to help them network and develop strategies for cooperation and support. The Congressional visits were put to use in support of U.S. human rights and democracy goals as members were briefed on the domestic situation and encouraged to pose frank questions to Syrian leaders about Syria's human rights practices.

Allowable U.S. assistance focused on public diplomacy and information rather than training. During the Syrian International Book fair, the Embassy sold books in Arabic on human rights and international law through the Arab Book Program. It also distributed copies of the Arab Human Development Report and the State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices. Speaker programs focused on encouraging greater Syrian participation in public life. For example, an Arab-American political consultant spoke to an audience of prominent Syrian intellectuals and opinion-makers about ethnic outreach in American politics and ways that individuals can influence the political system. The Embassy sponsored a Women's Issues Series, in connection with which the director of a Washington-based non-governmental organization spoke through direct video conferencing about women's leadership skills.

The International Visitor program promoted U.S. objectives in the areas of human rights and democracy by exposing up-and-coming Syrians to alternative viewpoints and encouraging broader participation in civil society. Exchanges last year introduced young Syrian journalists, academicians, civil society leaders and other opinion makers to American counterparts and helped them develop new skills and contacts.

## TUNISIA

Tunisia's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses in many areas; however, the Government continued to respect human rights in certain areas. Paradoxically Tunisia stands ahead of its regional neighbors on basic issues such as universal education, health care and the rights of women. Its impressive gains in these fields are undercut by an authoritarian system of government and significant limitations to political participation and freedoms of expression, association, assembly and the press. The Government remained intolerant of public criticism and used intimidation, physical abuse, criminal investigations, the court system, arbitrary arrests, residential restrictions and travel controls (including denial of passports) to discourage criticism by human rights and opposition activists. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals and tortured prisoners and detainees. The Government did not allow international observers to inspect prisons, and lengthy pretrial and sometimes incommunicado detention remained a problem.

The U.S. goal is to work with the Tunisian Government and civil society to increase the pace and substance of internal reform. Toward this end, the Embassy maintains a regular and specific dialogue on human rights with all levels of the Government, monitors and reports factually on important events, stays in contact with all elements of Tunisian civil society and media and develops and tailors elements from the four pillars of the U.S. primary assistance program, the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) which will have its Maghreb regional headquarters in Tunis. In addition, the Embassy produces its 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.

During 2003 and early 2004, 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. The key to this strategy was supporting a human rights dialogue with Tunisian government officials at all levels. During a four-month period, Secretary of State Powell, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner, and a senior U.S. Senator visited Tunisia and directly engaged senior Tunisian government officials on reform issues, including harassment of activists, media freedom, elections and prison inspections. Several U.S. officials raised the harassment and imprisonment of journalists and activists with the Government. Both President Bush and Secretary Powell raised human rights issues in their meetings with Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Washington, D.C., in February 2004.

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 has assigned one officer exclusively to this portfolio.

To promote the rule of law and human rights awareness, the Embassy outfitted a "common law reading room" at a Tunisian law school and equipped it for access to U.S. legal databases. Two Tunisian women judges participated in the Women in Law Program, a regional initiative funded through the MEPI, which enabled them to share their personal and professional experiences with counterparts from other Arab countries and the United States. Tunisians also participated in MEPI's Arab Judicial Forum in Bahrain. The Embassy funded the publication in Arabic of an election observers training manual designed to train observers in the region. Embassy officers attended trials involving prominent human rights issues and activists and requested prison access.

MEPI reinforced the U.S. strategy through projects to strengthen civil society and its ability to influence and communicate with the Government. In discussions about MEPI, U.S. officials urged the Tunisian Government to liberalize registration and funding mechanisms for non-governmental organizations. The Embassy tried to ensure active participation of Tunisian women in all MEPI programs, including sending a delegation of Tunisian businesswomen to participate in the U.S.-Arab Economic forum in Detroit. Tunisian executives and political leaders also participated in other MEPI training programs.

Several projects sought to promote media independence and professionalism. The Embassy funded English language training for 40 journalists and maintained ongoing ties with the country's sole school of journalism, enabling discussions of U.S. foreign policy and press freedom in the United States. The Embassy also published a "daily outreach journal" to media contacts and worked to explain the U.S. approach to freedom of expression in daily interactions with the press.

Wide placement in the Tunisian press of op-ed pieces written by the Ambassador and State Department officials and distribution of articles from the International Information Program helped raise awareness of international norms and practices and explain U.S. goals. The International Visitor program advanced U.S. human rights and democracy objectives by introducing Tunisian public servants and private citizens to U.S. policies and values directly. Under the program, 35 leaders in the fields of media, local government, human rights and judicial reform visited the United States to meet their counterparts and gain exposure to U.S. perspectives.

Embassy staff maintained close contact with Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious groups.

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. Embassy staff contributed to the annual trafficking in persons report on Tunisia.

## **WEST BANK AND GAZA**

Israel's overall human rights record in the West Bank and Gaza remained poor and worsened in the treatment of foreign human rights activists. The Palestinian Authority (PA) also had a poor human rights record. Israel's security forces killed at least 573 Palestinians and one foreign national and injured 2,992 Palestinians and other persons during the year. Israeli security units often used excessive force in their operations that resulted in numerous deaths. Israel carried out policies of demolitions, strict curfews and closures that directly punished innocent civilians. Israeli forces often impeded the provision of medical assistance to Palestinian civilians by strict enforcement of internal closures, harassed and abused Palestinian pedestrians and drivers at the approximately 430 Israeli-controlled checkpoints in the occupied territories and conducted mass, arbitrary arrests in the West Bank. Israel restricted the freedom of the Palestinian media and placed strict limits on freedom of assembly and movement for Palestinians.

The PA continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Palestinian terrorists and gunmen were responsible for the deaths of 376 Israelis killed in the occupied territories. Many members of Palestinian security services and the Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization participated with civilians and terrorist groups in violent attacks against Israeli civilians inside Israel, Israeli settlers, foreign nationals and soldiers. Palestinian security forces used excessive force against Palestinians during demonstrations. PA security officials abused prisoners and arbitrarily arrested and detained persons. PA courts were inefficient and failed to ensure fair and expeditious trials, and PA executive and security services frequently ignored or failed to enforce court decisions. Internal closure in the occupied territories obstructed courts from holding sessions or issuing rulings. The PA security forces infringed on the right to privacy and restricted freedom of speech and the press.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for the West Bank and Gaza supported implementation of President Bush's two-state vision, the end of violence and the restart of a political process within Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. The United States utilized bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to emphasize the unacceptability of violence on all sides and demand PA actions against terrorism in the West Bank and Gaza as well as in Israel. The Roadmap explicitly calls on both parties to end incitement, and calls on the Palestinians to undertake comprehensive reforms.

U.S. programs worked to improve the rule of law in the West Bank and Gaza. Approximately \$1.9 million in assistance was provided to introduce advanced caseload management techniques and equipment to seven Palestinian courts. This same program improved the capabilities of the Palestinian Attorney General's

office, helping the state prosecutor's office modernize its administrative functions and raise its technical capacity. Programs offered judicial training, specifically addressing complex areas of modern law such as international property rights, international banking, commercial transactions and ethics. Assistance further helped establish two Alternative Dispute Resolution centers that are available to mediate and arbitrate legal claims outside the court system.

U.S. officials continued to encourage Palestinian legislators to pursue governmental reform. Video-conferencing equipment financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development enabled the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) to deliberate and conduct parliamentary sessions despite frequent closures and travel restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza. Such sessions included the historic Spring 2003 session during which the PLC revised the Palestinian Basic Law to create the position of the Prime Minister. In addition, the United States funded other programs totaling approximately \$3 million to strengthen the institution of the PLC. Assistance improved its capacity to conduct oversight of the executive branch, raised the quality of its lawmaking, deepened its management controls and capacity and extended its reach to ensure that the PLC effectively represented the interests of its constituents.

Other funding supported preparations for Palestinian elections, including assistance for women candidates and women's political organizations, and training in building and promoting political platforms. These activities offered leadership and organizational training to emerging young Palestinian activists, mid-career managers and mid-level government workers.

Support for civil society development in the West Bank and Gaza remained a U.S. priority, and its flagship program, "Tamkeen," was allocated \$33 million for 2000-2005. To date, the project has awarded 193 grants totaling \$10 million to Palestinian civil society organizations to promote democracy and provide training in advocacy, finance and strategy. A \$1 million "Moderate Voices" project supported Palestinian civil society organizations that have developed creative means, including a popular radio soap opera series, to teach non-violence, conflict resolution and mediation. The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative helped launch an Arab Civitas project to introduce civic education into Palestinian schools.

The United States provided assistance to strengthen media professionalism, content and independence. Programs provided instruction to print journalists on investigative reporting and trained television media professionals on the production and airing of topical talk shows.

Public diplomacy programs sought to improve human rights awareness in the West Bank and Gaza among all citizens. The Consulate General in Jerusalem hosted numerous speakers on the topics of rule of law and democratization, sponsored Palestinians' participation in international conferences addressing these topics and provided books and other publications in Arabic and English on human rights and democracy to local

schools, libraries, PA officials and other contacts. Palestinians were also regular participants in the Salzburg Seminar, International Visitor and Fulbright Summer Institute programs, which focused on democracy and human rights topics.

The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration administered \$1.4 million in special projects to promote human rights, tolerance and conflict resolution skills among Palestinian refugee children. Under a multi-year grant to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees, projects introduced supplementary educational materials and peer mediation training in all UNRWA schools in the West Bank and Gaza in grades 4 through 9. The materials included illustrated storybooks that introduce basic concepts of human rights, tolerance and responsibility for one's actions as well as worksheets that introduce human rights and tolerance concepts at pre-selected points in the Palestinian curriculum.

## **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 shared Constitutional power. International observers judged April 2003 parliamentary elections to be generally free and fair, and there was a marked decrease from previous years in election related violence; however, there were some problems with underage voting, confiscation of ballot boxes and voter intimidation. Although many problems remained, the Government's respect for human rights improved in a few areas during 2003. There were limitations on citizens' ability to change their government. Security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest, detain and torture persons. The Government sometimes failed to hold members of the security forces accountable for abuses; however, the number of security officials tried for abuses increased since 2002. Prison conditions remained poor. Despite constitutional constraints, security officers routinely monitored citizens' activities, searched their homes, detained citizens for questioning and mistreated detainees. Prolonged pretrial detention, judicial corruption and executive interference undermined due process. The Government continued to harass and intimidate journalists despite a decline in detention of journalists from last year. 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. 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. Child labor remained a problem.

The United States actively encourages the Government to continue to strengthen its human rights record and enact social reforms, improve problems within the judiciary and further the process of democratic development.



Yemen continued a long-term program of judicial reform in an attempt to counter the numerous problems within the judiciary. Yemen's Minister of Justice and other jurists participated actively in the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Arab Judicial Forum.

The United States has been urging the Government to enact social reforms, encourage respect for human rights and foster democratic development at the highest levels. For example, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns encouraged democratic progress in a visit to the Supreme Committee for Elections and Referenda in October. National Security Council officials raised democracy and human rights with the Foreign Minister in February 2004. The Ambassador and other senior-level officials engage frequently with the Ministry of Human Rights to improve the Government's ability and willingness to redress specific human rights abuses. U.S. officials have raised the issue of corruption at the highest levels, particularly as it relates to qualification for the Millennium Challenge Account.

The United States continued several long-term National Democratic Institute and International Foundation for Election Systems projects aimed at strengthening Yemen's political parties, improving election administration, increasing voter participation, fostering civil society and improving the country's human rights records. The United States provided technical assistance and supported election observers to the April 2003 parliamentary elections. The Ambassador, embassy staff and international election observers were present at polling places throughout the country to observe the elections.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) reopened its offices in Yemen in 2003. The USAID program focuses on strengthening democratic institutions among other areas. In 2004, the Embassy is increasing programming designed to strengthen democratic institutions, decentralize authority and resource management, and expand opportunities for civil society in decision-making.

MEPI, the Administration's primary mechanism to support a forward strategy for freedom in the Middle East, is currently working with Yemen on a variety of programs including legislative strengthening and civic education. For example, a \$2 million MEPI-funded program aims to address the 67 percent illiteracy rate among women and girls. MEPI is also continuing its work on election assistance in Yemen. In addition, both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Yemen have participated in numerous MEPI regional programs.

Two Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor-sponsored regional training sessions were held in Spring 2003 in Yemen, with the strong support of the Government. The first was a training academy for NGOs on political participation, political party development, women and media. The second provided specialized instruction in fact-based reporting to journalists from around the Arabian Peninsula. In October

2003, MEPI supported a third regional forum, held in Sanaa, which brought together democratic activists from the Gulf and Iraq to improve their advocacy skills in fostering political reform in the region.

In Fiscal Year 2003, the United States provided \$638,000 in International Military Education and Training assistance for the Yemeni military, a part of which addresses awareness of international norms of human rights and fosters 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 work closely with the Ministries of Defense and Interior to vet units for U.S. training. The Defense Department Counter-Terrorism Fellowship funds a training program in the United States for Yemeni military officers, one aim of which is to convey the importance of respecting human rights. This program, which has trained ten participants during the past year, is highly successful in Yemen and is ongoing.

In 2003 and early 2004, International Visitor programs brought NGO activists, government officials and other leaders to the United States to gain skills and knowledge in such areas as journalism, youth leadership, women's leadership in civil society and the public and private sector, and community service and NGOs. The Embassy continued to support 17 separate NGO projects in 2003. Two programs to provide training and capacity building to NGOs targeted rural areas where civil society remains nascent. Another project raised awareness of the struggles and rights of disabled children in public schools to combat discrimination. Several projects aimed to improve women's rights. Under a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, the Embassy established a project to build and furnish new primary schools for girls in isolated rural areas in order to give them access to modern education and to facilitate their inclusion within society.

A multi-year, \$1.4 million U.S. Labor Department-supported program administered through the International Labor Organization continued combating the problem of street child labor in 2003 and early 2004.

### **South Asia:**

The United States ♦ has helped tremendously in the past year to rebuild Afghanistan ♦ And I ♦m also here to ask you to do more for us in making the life of the Afghan people better, more stable, more peaceful. I ♦m here to thank you and the American people. ♦

♦ Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, meeting with President Bush, February 27, 2003

Countries in South Asia face myriad human rights and democracy challenges, however, there have been many recent improvements. In Afghanistan, the adoption of a constitution on January 4, 2004, represents a victory for the central government and a major step along the road toward democracy and stability. The

constitution provides strong human rights protections, including equality for women and ethnic groups, and the freedom to practice one's religion. There have also been positive developments in the relationship between India and Pakistan, with India and Pakistan agreeing at the January 2004 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Summit to resume a composite dialogue addressing all issues. Continued rapprochement between India and Pakistan has the potential to improve human rights in Jammu and Kashmir by curbing the activities of violent militants, spurring reform by the Government of India and improving the human rights performance of Indian security forces, as well as creating a more stable, prosperous environment for political development in Pakistan.

There are, however, several common themes to the problems of the region. Sectarian tensions, homegrown and imported terrorist groups, extremism, pervasive corruption and ineffective legal systems present major obstacles to development, peace and stability in the region. Corruption in South Asia is rampant, perpetuating inefficiency and a lack of administration of justice, often heightening abuse against members of the community who are most vulnerable, such as women and minority religious and ethnic groups.

Terrorism and the many insurgencies that plague the region both reflect and contribute to a poor human rights climate. For example, the on-going Maoist insurgency in Nepal has led to a challenging human rights environment. In combating an eight-year insurgency, there were reports of human rights abuses by the security forces and by Maoists, who committed worse abuses. In Sri Lanka, the December 2001 cease-fire between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has led to an improvement in the human rights situation. However, the Government has been unable to resume negotiations with the LTTE due to political infighting within the Government between the President and Prime Minister and the President's decision to call early elections in April.

Nonetheless, the unprecedented level of U.S. engagement with the countries of the region provides an opportunity and an obligation to press for greater democratic accountability and respect for individual rights.

The United States is addressing the broader challenges in South Asia through private and public diplomacy efforts, conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts, and education and economic reform in countries with large Muslim populations. U.S. democracy programs combine legislative, judicial and local governance reform and projects to strengthen civil society and independent media at national and local levels to improve transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. Support for democratic "precursors" such as political party building and reform, promoting women's and minority participation in political processes and institutions, human rights education and training, and anti-trafficking and child labor legislation and enforcement programs are also major areas of activity.

## **SUPPORT FOR TORTURE VICTIMS IN NEPAL**

Since the break of the cease-fire by Maoist insurgents in August 2003, the rate of violence and human rights abuses in Nepal has escalated, including the use of torture as punishment or to extract confessions. The U.S. Agency for International Development is supporting a \$2.5 million program to rehabilitate torture survivors and their families in Nepal, working to address the impunity that allows torture to continue. As part of the grant, a local non-governmental organization (NGO) trains medical and legal professionals in torture-related issues, supports legal actions by torture victims and documents human rights abuses. Stationary clinics provide comprehensive medical and psychological care, while mobile clinics reach torture survivors in remote areas. A shelter-based treatment center for female torture and trauma survivors has rehabilitated more than 100 women since it opened its doors in late 2002. Twelve community workers from district NGOs have received intensive counseling training, while ten district Psychosocial Support Units have been established to provide care and support to more than 400 trauma and torture victims. Since mid-2002, 179 medical professionals have been trained in managing torture cases, and more than 2,300 torture victims and their families have received comprehensive medical and psychological care as well as legal counseling. Mobile treatment clinics have conducted awareness programs for approximately 600 rural victims on legal rights and therapeutic recourses.

All clients receive free legal counseling, and get free legal representation if they wish to bring their cases before a court under Nepal's Torture Compensation Act, which provides compensation for victims of torture. Thirteen cases have been prosecuted to date, and 58 more are pending. The program trains lawyers on aspects of the Torture Compensation Act, trains medical professionals to examine, diagnose and treat torture survivors without re-traumatizing them, and trains doctors to document cases of torture to a standard acceptable as evidence in a court of law. Fact-finding missions comprising a doctor, a lawyer and a journalist investigate credible reports of human rights abuses and circulate reports among human rights organizations.

## **AFGHANISTAN**

The Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA) made significant progress in establishing institutions of democracy and governance in 2003, including the adoption and ratification of a sound Constitution that guarantees equal rights for women and minorities and reaffirms Afghanistan's commitments to international human rights conventions. While TISA's commitment to strengthening human rights and the rule of law continued, problems, exacerbated by inadequate resources and lack of institutional capacity, remained. There were instances where members of the factional security forces committed extrajudicial killings. The use of torture, prolonged pretrial detention and poor prison conditions were problems. Security problems and a judicial system devastated by two decades of conflict also contributed to human

rights violations. TISA has reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to reforming government institutions to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights as embodied in the new constitution.

Outside the capital, fighting between local militias maintained by rival commanders and the absence of robust legal and security institutions threatened stability and development. Taliban remnants and rogue warlords threatened, robbed, attacked, and occasionally killed local villagers, political opponents, prisoners, police officers, international peacekeepers and aid workers. While security and employment challenges remain a concern for many refugees and internally displaced people outside of Afghanistan, nearly three million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban as a sign of confidence in the ongoing stability process and hope for a better future in their native land. Freedom of speech and press was limited, and violence (including cases of rape and kidnapping) as well as societal discrimination against women, girls and minorities were concerns. Since child labor and the trafficking of persons were ongoing problems that undermined social stability, the Government did take some action against traffickers. The provisions in the new constitution mark an historic opportunity for TISA and future Afghan governments to address these and other social concerns with support from the international community.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Afghanistan includes assisting the TISA to rebuild and reform national security institutions, reform the judicial system and implement the principles of the Constitution. The United States supports TISA as it evolves into a nation that respects human rights, possesses strong democratic institutions and an independent judiciary, and conducts free and fair national elections under a new Constitution. The Embassy focused on strengthening and expanding the reach of the central Government to provide the basis for the rule of law, through training and capacity building of the national police, judiciary and numerous government ministries. U.S. efforts also included initiatives to promote independent media, human rights, an active civil society, respect for the rights of women and minorities, and anti-trafficking efforts. To encourage a stable, democratic and economically successful Afghanistan, the United States continually held high-level meetings between the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and other top U.S. officials and key Afghan political leaders.

In November, the TISA released a draft Constitution that was rigorously debated at the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ) in December and ratified in January 2004. The new Constitution calls for the Government's best efforts to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in June 2004. The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, assembly and religion within the limits of the law, as well as equal rights for women and minorities.

To support the creation of a popular constitution that respects individual and human rights, the United States invested \$5 million through the UN Development Program's (UNDP) CLJ project, which included monitoring special category elections, conducting provincial registration meetings, rehabilitation of CLJ

site facilities, a public information campaign and some logistical support. The United States provided additional funding in excess of \$5.5 million for substantive and operational support to the CLJ and to the preparation and process of the elections.

The United States established a comprehensive program for the training of all Afghan police, including some women, by December 2005. Each training course used in this program includes democratic policing, community-based policing and knowledge of and protection of human rights as well as women's rights. Recruitment of the police has been on a non-discriminatory basis, and a special program to encourage gender equity has been instituted. The United States has also committed to maintaining a civilian police model for the Afghan National Police, removing military and paramilitary forces from day-to-day policing. The United States believes the civilian police model encourages protection of human rights.

To foster and strengthen the rule of law, the United States offered technical assistance, financial support, equipment and advice to the Judicial Reform Commission for development and revitalization of the judicial system. The United States provided \$1.4 million for physical rehabilitation of judicial system infrastructure and will provide an additional \$2.2 million in Fiscal Year 2004. This included support for the renovation of court buildings, including the Afghan Supreme Court in Kabul. The United States also provided \$600,000, mostly through UNDP, for technical assistance and capacity building of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). Embassy officials work with the AIHRC, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Afghan officials to identify areas of particular concern and encourage wider reforms within the Government. The AIHRC has been active in documenting and investigating violations of human rights and bringing them to the Government's attention.

The United States funded a \$1.2 million program in political party development and domestic election monitoring and also funded a countrywide program on civic education, particularly for women, to promote acceptance of and familiarity with democratic norms and civic responsibility in Afghanistan. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is further adding \$9.7 million for additional domestic monitoring, civic education, political party work and assistance to Afghan electoral institutions.

U.S funding of approximately \$46 million offers technical assistance to the national electoral body, including in the area of voter education, providing assistance to political parties and civic leaders, training these groups in democratic election monitoring and conducting a civic education program. The United States also supports operational, logistical and security planning for the voter registration and election efforts.

During the year, the Embassy funded projects to encourage independent print and radio media. Grants totaling more than \$2.2 million through USAID helped to establish independent community and

commercial radio stations throughout the country that broadcast programs on a range of topics including the constitutional process, elections, democracy and human rights issues. These include women's radio stations in Herat and in Mazar-e-Sharif. Embassy officials investigated and protested egregious abuses of press freedom where journalists were harassed or threatened and approached the relevant government ministries regarding these cases. The Embassy also provided small grants to support two independent newspapers.

The Embassy worked with civil society organizations to promote religious tolerance. In May 2003, the Civil Development Foundation, a group of reformist, predominantly Shi'a Afghans, began publishing a monthly magazine called "Democracy" which has a circulation of 3,000. One of the goals of the magazine is to challenge religious despotism and to promote a moderate interpretation of Islam that is compatible with human rights. The publication of Hazara Shi'a reformist intellectual Dai Foladi's books "What is Democracy?" and "Faith and Freedom" was also supported with embassy financing.

Embassy officials facilitated high-level interaction and discussion among prominent U.S. women leaders, including Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, and Afghan women leaders. To promote the rights of women and improve their status in Afghan society, U.S. officials supported efforts during the CLJ to enshrine specific language in the draft Constitution guaranteeing equal rights for men and women.

To improve women's rights, the United States addressed the specific needs of women in all of its reconstruction programs and implemented more than 175 projects to increase women's political participation, role in civil society, economic opportunities and education. The United States supports the Ministry of Women's Affairs network of women's resource centers in each of Afghanistan's 32 provinces that provide a safe place for women to receive vocational training. The United States also funded a project to promote women's participation in the political process in central Afghanistan, offering workshops and discussion groups to rural women and support to potential female CLJ and parliamentary candidates. USAID gave two separate \$100,000 grants to support literacy courses for women and girls as well as teacher training in four western Afghan provinces.

The United States continues to harness private sector support for Afghan women through the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Projects completed or under way include journalism training, teacher training, entrepreneurship, legal training and micro-credit programs. The United States has also committed \$5 million to the "Rural Expansion of Afghanistan's Community-based Healthcare Program" which supports literacy programs and the training of birth attendants.

Afghan police made multiple arrests of alleged traffickers and rescued trafficked children during the year. An inter-ministerial committee was also established to combat child trafficking, and began work on a national action plan. Police and other government officials participated in sensitization and training workshops on human trafficking. To combat trafficking in persons (TIP), the United States provided \$190,000 to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the TIP situation in Afghanistan. Based on the results of this report, the United States provided an additional \$330,000 to IOM to build government capacity to combat trafficking, encourage inter-ministerial collaboration and forge cooperation among NGOs, international organizations and foreign governments within the region.

## **BANGLADESH**

The head of Bangladesh's parliamentary democracy, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, won her position in elections that were generally peaceful and free in most places, although sporadic violence still occurred. The Government's human rights record remained poor, as numerous human rights abuses continued to occur, including extrajudicial killings and torture by security forces. Prison conditions remained extremely harsh and life threatening and contributed to some deaths. Police corruption continued to be a problem, and a climate of impunity was an obstacle to ending the abuses and killings. Violence was a pervasive element in the country's politics. Fair and expeditious trials were problematic due to lengthy pretrial detention, corruption and a large judicial case backlog. Freedom of speech, movement and assembly was restricted, and opposition political parties continued to boycott Parliament, claiming a lack of opportunity to engage substantively on legislative and national issues. Child labor and abuse of child workers remained widespread and were serious problems. Trafficking in women and children for the purpose of prostitution and forced labor were also concerns, as was violence against women and discrimination against indigenous people and religious minorities.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Bangladesh strengthens 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, reduce court system backlogs, encourage better governance, reduce corruption, promote religious tolerance and address trafficking, as well as improve women, children and worker rights.

U.S. officials publicly highlight the need for improvements in human rights conditions by 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 Country Report is widely publicized in Bangladesh and closely scrutinized by the Government, opposition, press and non-governmental organizations (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, including the parliament, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and have condemned violence in the form of strikes and personal assaults as an instrument of political coercion. On Human Rights Day in December, the Deputy Chief of Mission hosted a human rights reception to signal the importance the United States places on human security. Attendees included local human rights activists, victims of human rights abuses, Bangladeshi officials and members of the diplomatic community. In conjunction with this event, the Ambassador wrote an op-ed piece printed in several newspapers on the importance of religious tolerance, freedom of speech and equal access to justice.

Because many of the human rights abuses centered on issues of governance and corruption, the Embassy focused its democracy promotion efforts in the sector of political reform and improving local governance. For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding projects totaling \$12 million to strengthen parliamentary committees, reform political parties, and assist elected local governments to play a more active role in society. The United States also continues to support local human rights groups through a four-year, \$7.4 million program that provides critical services such as monitoring police stations and providing shelter to abused women through sub-grants, as well as training and technical assistance to human rights NGOs. Its initiatives to combat the endemic problem of corruption and train Bangladeshi journalists in investigative journalism continue to evolve.

In order to address judicial reform, the United States has helped to establish a program of alternative dispute resolution which holds promise of modestly contributing to clearing the court system of its million-case backlog and enhancing access to justice for all citizens. The Embassy also makes effective use of the International Visitor program to advance the goal of respect for rule of law and sponsor expert speakers on topics like press freedom.

Since the police have perpetrated many of the human rights abuses, the Embassy has begun to focus not only on enhancing their professional skills, but improving their commitment to human rights and the rule of law. The Regional Security Office and Office of Defense Cooperation are also heavily involved in promoting human rights through the programs they sponsor to improve the professionalism of Bangladesh's security and military forces. Anti-Terrorist Assistance, International Military Education and Training, and Counter-Terrorism money has been used for this purpose. We are also beginning to use the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program to help improve police professionalism. The Office of Defense Cooperation funds and encourages Bangladesh to continue and increase its support to UN peacekeeping operations, which teach the Bangladeshi military international standards as it is called upon to enforce UN human rights efforts in its peacekeeping missions.

The Islamic Foundation, a Government of Bangladesh agency, provides religious training to approximately 45,000 imams nationwide. USAID provided orientation to 200 imams from the Islamic Foundation about U.S. programs in human rights, women's rights, health care, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, economic growth, democracy and governance. These imams also visited several U.S.-sponsored project sites in an effort to promote dialogue and work with the Government of Bangladesh to show them an aspect of U.S. foreign policy not typically featured in the local media.

Improving conditions for Bangladeshi workers has been a consistent aspect of the U.S. overall human rights strategy. Working with the Government, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, the International Labor Organization, and local labor and industry groups, the United States has had many achievements, including the virtual elimination of child labor from the export-oriented ready-made garment industry through a \$1.5 million project. 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. The International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor activities include a \$6 million project to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in five targeted industries ♦ beedi production (the hand-rolled cigarette industry), match-making, tanneries, construction and child domestic workers. As of December 2003, 19,874 children had been removed from hazardous work, and approximately 30,000 children have been placed in either non-formal or formal education or pre-vocational training. Finally, Bangladesh has committed to allowing full freedom of association in the export processing zones, and Embassy Dhaka continues to press the Government to make good on this promise.

USAID leads a thematic working group on anti-trafficking with the Government, civil society and other donor representatives that has developed the conceptual framework for the sector and launched a media communications package used by the Government and NGOs working in the field. The results are clear: Public awareness and condemnation of trafficking are going up, as are arrests and convictions of traffickers. Through a series of anti-trafficking film festivals, the United States is working to strengthen awareness of the issue regionally as well as in Dhaka. USAID also began an innovative program with an imams ♦ association in Chittagong, under which imams in the border areas receive training in anti-trafficking. Approximately 500 of these imams train other imams and engage their communities in discussions of this crime. Several of the imams who received this training have written letters to newspapers as well as conducted meetings following Friday prayers to initiate community strategies to combat trafficking.

## **BHUTAN**

Although Bhutan is ruled by a hereditary monarchy, in recent years, the Government adopted some measures to increase the power of the National Assembly. Civil liberties are severely limited as the

Government restricts freedom of speech, press, assembly and association, and the formation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Government also prohibits the formation of human rights organizations and political parties. Freedom of religion is restricted. Although there is no written constitution to protect fundamental political and human rights, the Government is currently soliciting comments from international legal experts on the second draft of a proposed constitution. In 2003, the National Assembly vigorously debated a broader variety of topics that included the national budget, the addition of new ministries and the government's policy on refugee return. In early 2003, local village leaders elected representatives to the National Assembly for those positions not appointed by the Government. The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi is responsible for issues involving Bhutan.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Bhutan has focused largely on the issue of Bhutanese refugees of ethnic Nepali descent who left Bhutan for Nepal in 1991-1992. U.S. efforts have been limited by the absence of diplomatic relations with Bhutan and an official mission in Thimphu. However, the Embassy significantly increased its interaction with the Government during 2003 by encouraging human rights improvements in Bhutan and the development of democratic institutions. Embassy officers engaged the Government and other interested parties, including donor countries, the United Nations and NGOs, regarding the plight of approximately 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Through active discussions with Bhutanese government officials, the Embassy has encouraged progress on this issue and suggested ways to resolve the situation, some of which have been implemented.

The Ambassador traveled to Bhutan in 2003 and addressed human rights concerns in meetings with the King, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and other high-ranking officials. An embassy officer visited Thimphu in October 2003 and discussed human rights, constitutional and political reform and domestic concerns such as health, labor, unemployment and education with Bhutanese officials, offering suggestions where appropriate. In January 2004, a delegation from Washington traveled to Thimphu and discussed the status of preparations for the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees to Bhutan. The Embassy maintained regular contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross, encouraging its further interaction with the Government. The Embassy continues interaction with NGOs and human rights activists concerned with Bhutan. In addition, the Embassy worked with the Bhutanese Royal Civil Service Commission to sponsor six Bhutanese government officials to participate in an International Visitor program in 2003 on good governance, conflict management and prevention, religious freedom and protection of human rights. The Embassy also sent one Bhutanese national to the United States via the Fulbright Scholarship Program.

## **INDIA**

India has a vibrant democracy and a strong constitutional framework designed to prohibit abuses and punish them when they occur; however, there is often weak enforcement of laws and a lag in the administration of justice. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however,

numerous serious problems remained, including extrajudicial killings, custodial deaths throughout the country and heavy-handed and occasional excessive use of force by security forces, as well as arbitrary arrest and disappearances while combating insurgencies in Jammu and Kashmir and several northeastern states. Other human rights issues included reported incidents of torture and rape by police and other government agents, poor prison conditions, detention throughout the country of those arrested under security-related laws such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act, prolonged detention while undergoing trial and witness intimidation, particularly in Gujarat. Societal violence and discrimination against women, trafficking of women and children for forced prostitution and labor, female feticide and female infanticide remained concerns. Widespread exploitation of workers, including indentured and bonded servants and child laborers continued, as did religiously motivated violence against Christians and Muslims.

U.S. human rights and democracy initiatives in India promote good governance and the rights of groups in society vulnerable to abuses such as religious minorities, refugees and workers, and focus on improving the rights of women and children who are victims of trafficking. U.S. engagement includes diplomatic interaction, sharing of information, public diplomacy and funding of projects to encourage respect for democracy and human rights.

To address concerns within the judicial system, the Embassy worked with a U.S.-based non-governmental organization (NGO) and the High Courts in Gujarat and New Delhi to impart legal training to practicing lawyers, judges and public prosecutors on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). ADR has been operational since 2003 in Gujarat, enabling more expeditious resolution of cases involving human rights violations such as excessive force by local police and infringement of due process and other civil rights.

The United States supported a wide range of initiatives to encourage religious tolerance and freedom. The Embassy offered small grants to NGOs addressing grassroots democracy issues in order to alleviate communal tension. An NGO in Calcutta provided education and rehabilitation to 300 impoverished and marginalized Muslim youths from a squatter settlement in the city. Another NGO used a grant to present a three-part series of workshops in Jammu and Kashmir, strengthening the skills of locally elected representatives. Still another NGO used its grant for a multiple month project to increase awareness of human rights in select lower and middle class communities and slums of Lucknow. The Embassy also launched Urdu and Hindi editions of its SPAN magazine, exploring issues such as globalization, conflict resolution, human rights, academic freedom and inclusiveness toward women and minorities. The Embassy also strengthened the curriculum and leadership at a predominantly Muslim university through the International Visitor program. The program's five participants were given professional training and met with faculty and administrators in American public and private universities. The "Seeds of Peace" program enabled 24 teenagers from Mumbai and Lahore, Pakistan to attend a three-week conflict resolution course in a neutral, supportive environment at a U.S.-based summer camp. During Ramadan, the Charg

d ♦ Affaires and other embassy officers hosted several Iftaar dinners to promote better relations with the Muslim community. On Christmas Day, the Charg ♦ addressed an interfaith celebration of the holiday sponsored by the Indian Islamic Center. The Charg ♦ also gave a televised speech to 500 students at Lucknow University on the importance of tolerance and diversity and authored a separate editorial on the same subject that appeared in ♦ Quami Awaz, ♦ a mass circulation Urdu daily.

The United States supports the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), whose mandate is to provide protection and assistance to refugees. India has the largest urban refugee population in the region, including some Burmese. In order to promote the rights of refugees, Consulate officials in Chennai interacted with government officials to encourage the proper treatment and repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees.

The United States provided funding to support expanded roles for women. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated a \$17.2 million, 5-year program to strengthen the protection of women ♦s legal rights, including dowry, divorce and property rights. This program also helped establish 11 counseling/legal aid centers for women in police stations. In September 2003, USAID also launched its South Asia Regional Initiative on Equity for Women and Children to promote women and children ♦s legal rights and provide counseling to victims of gender-based violence.

The Embassy assisted the U.S. Labor Department in launching a joint U.S.-India child labor project to be implemented through the International Labor Organization, which also addresses the issue of trafficked child laborers. Each government is contributing \$20 million to bring children in ten sectors (including the production of brassware, glass bangles, stone and footwear), out of the workplace and into school. Also in the area of promoting worker rights, the Labor Department is funding two projects implemented by the International Labor Organization in 2001-2004: \$1,213,117 for HIV/AIDS workplace education and \$1,300,000 for women ♦s employment, as well as a \$1,300,000 project on mine safety. In 2003, USAID concluded its child labor program funded through the UN Development Program. This program supported urban programs in Calcutta, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra that identified child laborers and placed them in educational programs to prepare them for entry into government schools.

During the year, the Embassy worked with Indian officials and international organizations on policy issues that address the problem of trafficking in persons (TIP). U.S.-funded workshops in New Delhi, Chennai and Calcutta brought together the business community with anti-trafficking NGOs to sensitize the corporate community to the trafficking problem and provide NGOs with an opportunity to utilize corporate resources. The Charg ♦ addressed the Delhi workshop, stressing the importance of a corporate response to the problems of trafficking in children.

Consulate officials in Chennai and Calcutta sponsored anti-trafficking workshops and seminars for national and state level officials on the plight of trafficked women in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and the Northeastern states. The Embassy also sponsored a week-long training session on ♦Children as Victims, Witnesses and Perpetrators, ♦ for 40 senior-level Indian police officers who included both Indian experts and U.S. law enforcement experts from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Embassy on trafficking, cyber pornography, prosecution and investigation. U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, engaged senior state government officials to press for more government action to combat TIP. The Ambassador also authored an article entitled "Fighting Trafficking in Persons" that was published in India's largest Hindi language daily. In addition, U.S. officials traveled extensively throughout India to meet with state and central government officials, law enforcement officers, and NGO leaders to discuss U.S. anti-trafficking policy and develop anti-trafficking programs.

U.S. efforts to combat trafficking also included support of a five-year South Asia-wide \$3.3 million anti-trafficking program. Implemented by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the program focuses on prevention through media outreach, sharing of best practices and capacity building. The United States supported the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in conducting an 11-state study of trafficking trends, establishing monitoring officers in 26 of India's 29 states. The United States and UNIFEM organized a national workshop for the NHRC's 26 regional monitoring officers to increase awareness of and political engagement against trafficking in persons. The United States also provided grants to an Indian NGO to establish a nation-wide anti-trafficking network, encouraging cooperation between local NGOs and government agencies. The Embassy funded a local NGO that trained community leaders from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi in methods to identify trafficking, gather evidence and assist victims. In addition, the United States provided \$644,631 for NGO anti-trafficking projects to be administered through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and USAID.

## **NEPAL**

Weakened by an eight-year Maoist insurgency, Nepal faces significant challenges in institutionalizing and enforcing respect for human rights and in strengthening its fledgling democratic institutions. The Government's human rights record remained poor, as there were numerous human rights abuses by members of the security forces, including abuse and disappearance of detainees, the use of torture as punishment or to extract confessions, and arbitrary and unwarranted lethal force. The Maoist insurgents also committed serious human rights abuses and continued their campaign against civilians as well as security forces, frequently committing torture, killings, bombings and forcibly conscripting children. Violence against women, trafficking in women and children for prostitution, and child labor were also human rights concerns.

After the Maoists unilaterally broke off the cease-fire on August 27, 2003, full-scale hostilities resumed, and the rate of violence and human rights abuses committed by both sides rapidly escalated. The insurgency has severely undermined the Government's capacity to deliver basic services, provide security and ensure the rule of law, and demonstrate to its population the benefits of democracy, including free and fair elections. The Government's ability to respond appropriately and effectively to human rights violations is hampered by institutional weaknesses, creating an environment of impunity. The military made limited progress in investigating and prosecuting alleged violations, and considerable room for improvement exists.

The lack of representative government at both the national and local levels is a matter of serious concern, and the increasing polarization between the political parties and the Government has stalled progress toward strengthening democracy. Parliamentary elections, postponed from November 2002 because of the deteriorating security situation, remain on indefinite hold, while polls to replace local representatives, whose terms expired in July 2002, have yet to be scheduled. The Government has publicly indicated that it intends to hold elections in late 2004. At the same time, corruption, incessant political in-fighting, an ineffective bureaucracy and an unresponsive judicial system have weakened public confidence in Nepal's 13-year-old experiment with democracy.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy engages the Government, the security forces, political activists and civil society to assist in building institutional capacity to ensure that principles of democracy and human rights are translated into practice. Areas of engagement include the Law of Armed Conflict, rehabilitation of torture victims, electoral and political reform, civic education, conflict management and mitigation, the rule of law, women's political participation, and combating child labor and trafficking in persons.

The United States maintains regular dialogue with the Government, security forces, political leaders and members of civil society on the importance of preserving respect for the human rights of all parties to the conflict. Over the past year, the Embassy's repeated demarches on this subject have met with somewhat greater responsiveness and transparency from senior members of the security forces, although much progress remains to be made. The July 2002 formation of a human rights cell in the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) was followed by the establishment of similar cells in the national police and paramilitary Armed Police Force. The Embassy and other U.S. officials, such as Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca, have encouraged the Government and senior officials in the security forces to engage in dialogue with representatives of human rights groups, and have advocated greater transparency in military and police investigations of alleged abuses. An editorial by the Ambassador on the occasion of Human Rights Week (December 10-15), emphasizing the importance of upholding international human rights standards, was prominently featured in the local English-language press.

The United States, both publicly and privately, has continued to urge a reconciliation between the Government and protesting political parties as the best way to restore representative democracy. The United States presses both sides to resume dialogue with one another to identify an expeditious resolution to a protracted stalemate. To upgrade the capacity and professionalism of the political parties, the United States is implementing party-development activities. During the year, the United States obligated \$100,000 for civic education programs, including activities ranging from voter education to curriculum creation and book translations. In late 2003, following a three-year, \$600,000 voter education program, the United States completed an electoral reform and elections assessment as the first step in a program intended to strengthen government election planning capacity.

The United States funded senior officials from Nepal's judiciary and anti-corruption agency, and supported members of civil society, to attend regional conferences on corruption. The United States also funded the travel of two members of the official delegation who signed the UN Convention against Corruption. In addition, invitational travel funding was provided for senior members of the judiciary to attend judicial reform conferences in the United States and meet with U.S. officials. The United States provided \$599,000 for non-governmental organization (NGO) efforts to strengthen community-based alternative dispute resolution in 11 conflict-affected districts. Since late 2002, more than 60 master trainers and 1,330 community level mediators have been trained to help resolve minor disputes.

During the year, the United States sponsored a military law exchange program focused on such human rights issues as the Law of Armed Conflict, military justice and discipline, and Rules of Engagement training for the RNA's Judge Advocate General, as well as two training programs focused on civil affairs. The United States signed an agreement with the Government to begin a \$250,000 police professionalization program, aimed at improving police capacity to manage civil disorder. To strengthen independent non-partisan human rights groups, the United States is providing \$117,000 in technical assistance to the National Human Rights Commission to employ the MARTUS System, a software tool to record and store information on human rights cases. An additional \$90,000 in assistance to the National Human Rights Commission will be provided to help research and analyze draft anti-terror legislation and ensure the right to a fair trial.

The United States is funding a two-year, \$600,000 program to rehabilitate victims of torture and provide comprehensive medical and psychological care to torture survivors and their families. A local NGO trains medical and legal professionals in torture-related issues, supports legal actions by torture victims and documents human rights abuses. Since mid-2002, 179 medical professionals have been trained in managing torture cases, and more than 2,300 torture victims and their families have received comprehensive medical and psychological care as well as legal counseling. Twelve community workers from district NGOs have received intensive counseling training, while ten district Psychosocial Support Units have been established



to provide care and support to more than 400 trauma and torture victims. More than 100 female torture victims have received comprehensive rehabilitation services. Mobile treatment clinics have conducted awareness programs for approximately 600 rural victims on legal rights and therapeutic recourses. In December 2003 the U.S. Department of Justice organized a workshop for 35 public prosecutors on ways to reduce workloads, increase coordination with law enforcement agencies and improve treatment of victims of crime.

In 2003, the United States provided assistance to approximately 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal through contributions to UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Program. Embassy officers engaged the Government of Nepal and other interested parties, including donor countries, the United Nations and NGOs, to promote durable solutions for the Bhutanese population. Although the Government processed more than 3,000 Tibetan asylum seekers for onward travel to India during 2003, occasional incidents of refoulement continued to occur. The United States strenuously protested the Government's May 2003 refoulement of 18 Tibetan asylum seekers. Following that incident, the Government articulated for the first time an official policy of non-refoulement. However, there was another report from the UNHCR that 15 Tibetans were deported in early 2004.

In order to promote women's development initiatives, the United States supported a number of women's empowerment programs through small grants, many of which trained women to become financially independent. In addition, the United States continues to provide approximately \$2 million to expand the political roles of women. Since late 2001, women's coalitions have engaged in advocacy campaigns on a wide variety of issues, including women's participation in locally elected positions, leadership training, reservation of 25 percent of local budgets for women's development and combating the dowry system.

In 2001, the United States began a \$5 million three-year **time-bound** program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The U.S. Labor Department provided \$1.6 million for a 2000-2003 project combating bonded labor under its "Promoting the Basic Rights of Workers" project. The Labor Department is also funding a four-year International HIV/AIDS Workplace Education project for \$440,000.

Since 2001, the United States has supported a \$1.6 million, four-year program to combat human trafficking. The program includes economic alternative programs for vulnerable groups, education programs and rights-based training for government anti-trafficking task force members, including parliamentarians, community leaders and transport workers. The program also addresses ways in which to improve anti-trafficking laws, offers psychological counseling services for victims, provides for the development and dissemination of information and educational materials, strengthening of national and regional networks and cross-border activities, and support for relevant research. Achievements include a policy to protect the rights of migrant workers, increased convictions for traffickers, increased interception of potential victims

at the community level and the successful rescue and repatriation of 152 Nepali girls and women from Indian brothels and circuses. The United States is also assisting the Daywalka Foundation to establish a law library focused on anti-trafficking resources.

## **PAKISTAN**

Pakistan is a federal republic, although the military retains a major role. In October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf overthrew the elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif; the Supreme Court later sanctioned the coup and directed Musharraf to restore elected government within three years. Musharraf assumed the presidency by decree in 2001 while continuing as Chief of Army Staff, and held a nationwide referendum in April 2002 that extended his presidency for five years. Four months after the referendum, President Musharraf announced a controversial package of constitutional amendments, the Legal Framework Order (LFO), which amended the suspended Constitution to allow the President to dismiss the Prime Minister and dissolve the Parliament, the creation of a National Security Council as a constitutional body and the insertion of a number of qualification requirements for candidates for Parliament. Several of the amendments had the effect of transferring substantial executive power from the prime minister to the previously symbolic presidency. Opposition politicians, lawyers, civil society groups and many in the international community expressed concern about the amendment package and its constitutional legitimacy.

Elections were held for local governments in 2001 and for the National Assembly in October 2002. Domestic and international observers criticized the elections as deeply flawed. In February 2003, Senate elections were held. After several months of negotiations, in December 2003, the Government and the MMA, Pakistan's main coalition of Islamic parties, voted in the national and provincial assemblies to incorporate a large part of the LFO into the 1973 Constitution as its 17th Amendment. The amendment affirmed Musharraf's presidency until 2007 and his right to serve concurrently as Chief of Army Staff until the end of 2004. The amendment allows the President to dissolve Parliament but requires him to obtain the consent of the Supreme Court within 30 days. Opposition parties contend that the amended Constitution legitimizes the powerful role of the military in politics, and leaves a great deal of power in the hands of the President.

The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Some members of the security forces committed serious human rights abuses. Prison conditions remained extremely poor, and police arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens. The overall credibility of the judiciary remained low. The press was able to publish relatively freely; however, journalists practiced self-censorship, especially on sensitive military issues. There were reports of central government intimidation against journalists, and provincial and local governments occasionally arrested journalists and closed newspapers. The Government imposed some limits on freedom of association, religion and movement. Governmental and societal discrimination against religious minorities,

particularly Christians and Ahmadis, remained a problem. Domestic violence against women, rape and abuse of children remained serious problems. Top levels of the Government publicly criticized the practice of "honor killings," but such killings continued, and traditional social and legal constraints continued to keep women in a subordinate position in society. Trafficking for the purposes of prostitution and bonded labor remained a serious problem. The Government and employers continued to restrict worker rights significantly. Debt slavery persisted, and bonded labor by both adults and children remained a problem. The use of child labor remained widespread.

The United States supports President Musharraf's vision of a moderate Islamic democracy, including the Government's ongoing efforts to improve human rights through public debate, legislative proposals and other initiatives. President Bush believes that democracy is essential to achieving President Musharraf's vision of a modern, tolerant and prosperous Pakistan, and publicly noted that the United States was providing \$31 million for civil society initiatives in Pakistan, aimed at broadening political participation and expanding education opportunities, especially for women and girls. The United States continues to urge the Government to strengthen the judiciary and to prepare for free and fair multiparty elections in 2007 that meet international standards.

The United States also raises ongoing concerns about human rights abuses. Throughout the year, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina B. Rocca, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Nancy Powell and other senior U.S. officials raised human rights issues in general, as well as specific cases involving journalists, opposition politicians and religious freedom activists, directly with the Government of Pakistan. For example, the United States consistently urged that arrested opposition figure, Javed Hashmi, be treated in a fair and transparent manner, with due regard for fundamental rights, including those of speedy public trial, access to counsel and family visitation. The Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission repeatedly expressed concerns about this case in conversations with the Government.

The U.S. Ambassador repeatedly underscored the importance of a return to democratic civilian rule and respect for human rights with President Musharraf and other senior government officials. The Ambassador also underscored the importance of these issues to the public, including in her speech to the Karachi Council on Foreign Relations in November 2003, when she said, "Pakistan's commitment to the further advancement of democracy and human rights is central to its efforts to build a stable, positive future for its people." In her speech, the Ambassador also voiced the need for strong Pakistani democratic institutions and practices, including a National Assembly that plays a vigorous and positive role in governance, an independent judiciary that promotes the rule of law and for the case of Javed Hashmi.

To promote democracy and human rights, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates worked with the Government and local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to strengthen existing institutions,

train civil society and government leaders, promote the rule of law and raise awareness on key human rights and democracy issues.

In August 2003, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Government of Pakistan signed a three-year, \$38 million grant to support the package of good governance initiatives the Government of Pakistan announced in 2001. As of March 1, 2004, obligations included \$8 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 and \$11 million in FY 2004. USAID's program promotes better governance by strengthening national and provincial legislatures, district governments, civil society organizations and the media. USAID is also increasing the effectiveness of new NGOs and is providing small grants to encourage district governments, local communities, and the private sector to develop and manage small grants.

The USAID grant will encourage private-sector participation to improve social services. USAID's program will also strengthen civil society's voice in the process of making development decisions, help to build a more open, diverse and socially responsible broadcast media, and increase governmental accountability and transparency. The legislative strengthening program, which includes work with parliamentarians, legislative secretariats and relevant media, began in early 2004. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor also provided \$50,000 to support a judicial improvement project.

In 2003, USAID launched a \$1 million program to strengthen Pakistan's broadcast media through training the media, particularly radio journalists, in how to be effective advocates. In addition, USAID is providing equipment and technical assistance to Peshawar University and the Uks Foundation. Along with a nationwide training program for radio journalists, Internews, USAID's implementing partner, is assisting editors and managers with program content and developing other skills and communications strategies to create a stronger, more open environment for the media in Pakistan. Part of the USAID media program will fund the development of radio programs geared toward women's issues.

USAID is providing a small grant, in coordination with a similar grant from the Swiss Government, to Transparency International (TI)/Pakistan, which focuses on anti-corruption programs, to allow the organization to open an office in Pakistan. USAID and the Ambassador spoke at a TI Conference in Islamabad, stressing the importance of rule of law and transparency in governance as a means to encourage new foreign investment. USAID has developed a website for all of its programs that will provide transparency on U.S. partners and their activities.

The United States provided \$1 million to support an International Military and Education Training program for the Pakistani security forces. The program increases awareness of international norms of human rights and fosters greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military and the rule of law. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Defense Attach's Office worked closely with the Ministry of

Defense to vet military units for U.S. training and checked candidates with other embassy offices. The United States also promoted effective and professional law enforcement, goals key to promoting human rights in Pakistan, by providing \$561,000 to train 622 law enforcement professionals in 2003.

Furthering the U.S. policy of encouraging religious freedom, the Embassy pushed for aggressive investigations and prosecutions of those who perpetrated violence against religious minorities. The Embassy stayed in regular contact with representatives from the largest religious minorities to monitor their treatment and raised specific cases of concern involving religious rights activists with the Government of Pakistan, as well as monitored cases against members of religious minorities prosecuted under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. The Public Affairs Section of the Embassy also sent religious leaders to the United States to take part in International Visitor programs that highlighted religious diversity and tolerance.

In support of U.S. policy to combat trafficking worldwide, the United States is funding the first-ever baseline study to determine the scale and scope of the trafficking problem in Pakistan. The study will enable the United States as well as NGOs to better design future programs to reduce trafficking in persons in Pakistan. Embassy representatives attended and spoke at several trafficking conferences held in Pakistan. Senior embassy staff have raised concerns about the trafficking issue with Pakistani officials, in particular the head of the Federal Investigative Agency, charged with implementing Pakistan's anti-trafficking laws, on numerous occasions. The Ambassador has discussed the issue on several occasions with the Minister of Interior and other officials. Trafficking in persons is included as one of the topics in the U.S.-Pakistan Law Enforcement Working Group.

The United States continued to be the largest supporter of the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor in Pakistan. Specifically, the United States sponsored a \$4 million project to combat child labor that targets working children and children at risk of falling into work 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. In addition, to continue to support grassroots community and labor organizations, the Embassy sent a leader of the Bonded Labor Liberation Front on a multi-regional International Visitor program focused on "NGO Management."

## **SRI LANKA**

Sri Lanka has a long history of democratic institutions and processes, but its elections have historically been fraught with violence, and government capacity at the district and local levels is weak. Political infighting within the Government between the President and Prime Minister, resulting in the President's decision to call early elections in April, was also an obstacle to attaining stability and democracy. While the overall human rights situation has improved significantly following the December 2001 commencement of the peace process between the Government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization,

serious problems remained in some areas. These included torture of detainees by the military and police as well as the deaths and rapes of prisoners. Despite government investigations in some cases of past abuse, impunity remained a problem. Discrimination and violence against religious minorities increased, and discrimination against persons with disabilities as well as ethnic discrimination against Tamils persisted. Violence and discrimination against women, child prostitution and trafficking in women and children were also serious concerns. The LTTE continued to commit serious human rights abuses including extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, detentions, extortion and recruitment of child soldiers.

U.S. human rights and democracy initiatives in Sri Lanka focus on the ongoing peace process, which has had a direct and positive impact on the human rights situation in the country. The United States works through consistent and high-level use of public and private diplomacy tools, military-to-military human rights training and targeted humanitarian and development assistance.

As part of this initiative, Deputy Secretary of State Armitage co-chaired international donor conferences in 2002 and June 2003 in support of the peace process during which he repeatedly highlighted the importance of democratic societies and respect for human rights. The Deputy Secretary also chaired a meeting of Sri Lanka's major donors in February 2004, which called on the Government of Sri Lanka to hold free and fair elections and to resume formal negotiations with the LTTE as soon after the elections as possible. President Bush reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the peace process and the strengthening of democratic institutions during his November 2003 meeting with Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. The Embassy consistently reiterated this message in meetings with Sri Lankan officials, citing the peace process as a key factor in promoting human rights and democracy.

The LTTE is a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) controlling about 15 percent of Sri Lanka and exerting influence in approximately another 15 percent of the country. U.S. officials have made repeated public statements expressing concern about the LTTE's unabated recruitment of children, assassination of political opponents and harassment of the minority Muslim population. Through dialogue with influential Tamil politicians and public diplomacy tools, the Ambassador communicated the U.S. position regarding the LTTE's October 2003 re-listing on the U.S. FTO list.

As part of a \$1.5 million U.S. Agency for International Development project, the U.S. strategy for Sri Lanka includes funding, technical assistance and training to empower local civil society groups, media organizations, political parties and peace stakeholders to participate in national dialogues of peace. The United States has worked to enhance the skill level of the Peace Secretariat staff, particularly in conflict analysis and negotiation processes.

The National Human Rights Commission, a government-appointed independent body, has been actively investigating abuses and has more than 2,500 cases of alleged abuses pending. To help strengthen the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor funds a \$100,000 project to assist in monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, especially in developing tools such as the Human Rights Monitoring System software and methodologies for participatory human rights training and education.

The Government's arbitrary arrest of citizens under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) has been a serious human rights problem. Although the PTA is no longer used to detain new suspects, 65 Tamils remain in jail on PTA charges. The United States funds local organizations that work to insure that those who remain in detention under the PTA have access to legal services. In addition, the United States emphasized to the Government the importance of actively investigating reports of government officials failing to comply with legal protections. The United States provided much-needed generators and computer equipment to 19 courts in the war-torn north and east. This equipment will help court officials better manage their large caseloads.

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.

Multiple attacks on Christian churches in Sri Lanka during 2003 led the United States to express deep concern about the violence in meetings between the Ambassador and Sri Lankan high-level government officials, including the President and Prime Minister, officials responsible for Buddhist, Tamil and Christian affairs, and top police officers. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca also discussed this issue in depth with a Sri Lankan presidential advisor in Washington in February 2004. As part of this effort, the United States urged that those responsible for the violence be arrested and prosecuted. In speaking with Sri Lankan government officials and religious leaders, the United States also expressed concerns about draft legislation targeting so-called "unethical conversions," noting that the campaign for such legislation was a contributing factor in the deterioration of the religious freedom situation in the country. The Embassy also used the International Visitor program to further promote human rights and religious freedom. During 2003, the Embassy nominated two Muslim leaders who participated in an "Islam in America" program.

To address worker rights issues, the United States funds a regional branch office in Sri Lanka of the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, which is active in maintaining contacts with trade unions and in promoting worker rights.

The United States continued its dialogue with the Government regarding trafficking in persons. The Embassy received funding to support National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) efforts to increase police investigative capacity in cases of juvenile abuse. The Embassy is also funding NCPA's efforts to engage the judiciary in ways to lessen the impact on children testifying in such cases. The United States provided assistance to a non-governmental organization for its work in combating trafficking in children and rehabilitating sexually exploited children. The United States also funded psychosocial support for children affected by the armed conflict.

### **Western Hemisphere:**

The government of my country, by denying civil rights to the citizens, is denying to the Cuban people the right of self-determination. ♦

-- Oswaldo Pay ♦ Sardinias, winner of the Sakharov Prize in 2002

Democratic institutions and civil society continue to face serious challenges in several countries in the Western Hemisphere. During the year, endemic corruption and inefficiency, internal violence and rising polarization threatened democratic stability in Bolivia and Haiti. In both countries, the elected presidents resigned from office followed by a constitutional transfer of power to their respective successors. Protection of fundamental human rights, including core labor rights, needs continued strengthening, especially in the 15 Latin American countries highlighted in this report. Weak judicial and political systems in the region often fail to enforce the rule of law equitably and protect the fundamental human rights of all citizens. Reconciliation and accountability for past abuses, including support to human rights investigations of abuses during military dictatorships and other non-democratic governments, remain critical issues. The rights and political inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations in the region, including the indigenous, Afro-Latinos, women and children vulnerable to labor and sexual exploitation continued to be a primary concern for the United States.

In 2003 and 2004, the United States continued to focus on consolidating democratic institutions, including the democratization and decentralization of political processes, and on promoting transparency and respect for human rights in the Western Hemisphere. U.S. assistance to the region included coordinated projects to strengthen labor systems and markets through the promotion of freedom of association, collective bargaining and protection of core labor standards in Central America as well as regional political party development programs that incorporated internal party reforms with democratization and expanded outreach to constituents. An integrated SOUTHCOM human rights initiative included regional military conferences on Human Rights Consensus Document Implementation and programs bringing military and



civilian authorities together with human rights organizations to implement standards for fostering a culture of respect for human rights and international humanitarian law within the military and public security forces.

The United States is buttressing regional efforts to resolve conflicts and strengthen rule of law, free media and civil society. Building upon the Community of Democracies, democratic nations from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Miami in June 2003 for a ♦Dialogue on Democracy, ♦ to exchange experiences and develop inter- and intra-regional dialogues, institutions and strategies to strengthen the global framework of democracy.

Outreach to indigenous communities and other marginalized populations, including Afro-Latinos and women, was strengthened and expanded in the region, with particular emphasis in Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. Among other outreach and inclusion initiatives, the Embassy in La Paz hired indigenous advisors and supported the development of original radio programming and publications on democracy and other key issues in indigenous languages. U.S. Agency for International Development-supported programs throughout the region worked to support grassroots democratization, transparency and efficiency in municipal governments and the political and economic inclusion of traditionally marginalized populations.

In support of UN Security Council Resolution 1529 and the CARICOM Prior Action Plan for Haiti, the United States quickly established an interagency coordinating group to support the reconstruction of democracy (including key institutions such as the criminal justice system), promote the rule of law and respect for human rights, strengthen and restructure local government and promote reconciliation and social reintegration. Mediation and conflict resolution programs in Venezuela sought to encourage peaceful and democratic dialogue among polarized groups in that country and to promote a constitutional solution to the political impasse. Additional U.S. programs worked to help children affected by the civil conflict in Colombia, including the reintegration and emotional recovery of more than 1,000 child soldiers. Other programs in the hemisphere identified and helped combat the worst forms of child labor including sexual exploitation. In Brazil, the United States is working through civil society and governmental networks to expand access and assistance for child victims of trafficking, while anti-trafficking educational and assistance programs in Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Belize, Haiti and other countries support research, training and the development of remedial legislation.

### **COLOMBIA CHILD SOLDIERS**

Colombia ♦s internal conflict has had a devastating impact on Colombian children. Among other human rights violations inflicted on children, illegal terrorist groups, including the United Self-Defense Forces

(AUC), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), forcibly recruit young children and use them to serve as combatants, informants, sex slaves, spies and messengers. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute (Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar or ICBF) estimates that between 12,000 and 15,000 children are members of these terrorist groups. Child soldier deserters report that local terrorist group commanders threaten to kill their families if they desert or attempt to do so. In 1999, the ICBF opened the first center for the specialized treatment of ex-combatant children. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) expanded and strengthened ICBF's program to reintegrate child soldiers in 2000. When USAID began working with ICBF, the Institute had only four special attention centers caring for 80 child ex-combatants. At the end of 2003, the program had helped open five Transit Homes, 16 new Specialized Attention Centers, six Half-Way Houses and two Reference Centers in eight cities throughout the country, benefiting approximately 1,375 ex-combatant children. In addition, 181 child ex-combatants from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have been assisted in their communities and 9,234 children at risk of being recruited by illegal armed groups have benefited from prevention activities.

## **ARGENTINA**

While the Government of Argentina generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there were some allegations of extrajudicial killings and other abuses by police, security forces or prison officials. These abuses were often linked to corruption within the police and security forces. There were clear signs that some of the judiciary was both subject to political pressure and exerted political pressure, and corruption was also a problem. Prison overcrowding continued, in part due to lengthy pre-trial detention stemming from a slow judicial process. Discrimination against minorities continued to be an underreported and largely unrecognized problem, as was trafficking in persons, including cases of child sexual exploitation.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to combat corruption and human rights abuses and encourage more responsive and sustainable democratic institutions, laws and economic and political practices in Argentina. U.S. efforts included projects to enhance the efficiency of the Argentine judicial system, promote greater public participation in policy making, assist minorities and combat the worst forms of child labor and trafficking in persons. Throughout the year, embassy officials, including the Ambassador, maintained a continuing dialogue with Argentine policy and opinion makers on human rights issues, including issues discussed in multilateral forums.

Supporting improvements in the justice system was a priority. The Embassy worked to support efforts at strengthening the rule of law in general, addressing corruption and ending impunity for past human rights violations and preventing them in the future. The United States has long worked to address such judicial

reform and the rule of law, raising the issue regularly in its contacts with government and judicial authorities. In 2003, the Embassy brought the Justice Ministry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations together for an ongoing cooperation project called "Justice Undergoing Change." In addition, the United States supported eight speaker programs and one voluntary visitor program for Argentine judges, prosecutors, NGOs and members of the press. This visitor program covered issues including case management, juvenile justice, training of judges, working with the media, alternative dispute resolution, court administration, public participation and access to justice, and victims' rights. The province of Chaco and the city of Buenos Aires are currently implementing pilot projects on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in the judiciary as a direct result of this program, and NGO participants prepared a proposal that served as the basis for government decrees in 2003 on public consultation procedures for naming Supreme Court Justices and other judges and made that system significantly more transparent. These judicial reform efforts were so well received and effective that similar projects on related topics will be implemented through the current and coming year.

The United States has also long sought to enhance transparency and public participation in the policy process by hosting International Visitor program trips, publishing material, hosting World Net conferences and organizing speaker tours. A member of the Anti-Corruption Office participated in an International Visitor program on accountability in government and business, and NGOs have increased their capacity by participating in similar U.S. programs. This effort continues in close cooperation with the Anti-Corruption Office, through initiatives such as a U.S. speaker to discuss the U.S. Freedom of Information Act as Argentina contemplates a similar law. The United States also continued to provide technical assistance to the judiciary on corruption-related cases, while U.S.-funded institutes (the International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute) provided assistance to Argentine institutions, including non-partisan work to strengthen democratization and transparency in the nation's political parties and democratic processes.

The United States works closely with the Government, through a continuous dialogue with the Foreign Ministry Human Rights office regarding the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and the State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, to coordinate Argentine support for democratic principles and improved human rights practices throughout the world. As part of that effort, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Kozak visited Buenos Aires in 2003 to discuss with Argentine authorities ways in which to make the UNCHR a more effective advocate of fundamental human rights.

The Embassy raised specific human rights cases noted in the Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Argentina with national and provincial government officials, including legislators, the Secretariat of Human Rights for Buenos Aires Province, and the Buenos Aires Provincial Security Minister. The

Government subsequently acted to dismiss 69 officials of the Federal Penitentiary Service suspected of corruption and dismissed a number of Federal Police officials suspected of corruption. The Province of Buenos Aires also examined the financial disclosure statements of provincial police chiefs and implemented a torture prevention program aimed to reduce abuses in the province. Finally, the Government revoked a decree preventing extraditions for human rights violations committed during the country's "dirty war" and sought and achieved the nullification of de-facto amnesty laws for dirty war violations.

The Embassy routinely vetted military training participants for compliance with Leahy legislative requirements, and human rights training was integrated into all U.S.-supported military exercises and operational training carried out in Argentina. The United States has also made improving civil-military relationships a priority in the training of local military and defense civilians. The consular section refused visitor visas under pertinent statutes to two ex-military officers implicated in torture and other human rights violations during Argentina's dirty war.

The United States directly and regularly raised concerns regarding the Government's ongoing efforts to achieve justice for the 1994 AMIA Jewish community center bombing in which 85 people were killed. The Embassy continued to provide technical assistance directly to the judiciary in this case, while closely monitoring the ongoing trial of those accused as accomplices in that terrorist attack. To further combat religious discrimination and promote tolerance, the Embassy sponsored two experts to attend Holocaust Education training courses in the United States.

Anti-discrimination programs were also supported through a U.S. donation of two used computers to a local foundation providing vocational training to people with disabilities and sponsorship of a series of well-received speaker programs on the economic development of indigenous communities. The latter program complemented an initiative by the Government, an exemplary public consultation and coordination process to develop a National Plan Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Intolerance.

The Ambassador regularly raised U.S. concerns about the worst forms of child labor and trafficking in persons with the Labor and Foreign Ministers, as part of an active effort to gather information and enhance high-level awareness of these issues. Two local activists, selected to participate in the International Forum on Trafficking in Persons in February 2003, continued to investigate and promote efforts to assist victims and raise public awareness. Their efforts were strengthened through the Government's hosting of a day-long seminar on trafficking in persons for government, international and civil society participants and through Argentine participation in an international training conference on forced child labor and links to child pornography.

## **BELIZE**

Belize is a parliamentary democracy. Human rights and democratic processes were largely respected in Belize. Although there were significant improvements in the prison system and awareness of trafficking in persons, corrupt practices and gaps in infrastructure, budget and social services contributed to abuses in areas such as police brutality and child labor.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to strengthen the rule of law, improve prison conditions and combat child labor and trafficking in persons. This strategy complements Government of Belize efforts with training, resources and infrastructure assistance. Embassy officials maintain an active dialogue with government officials, non-governmental organizations and private sector individuals and organizations to identify areas of concern, confirm reported problems and assert U.S. positions. Following the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report determination that Belize was a Tier III (non-compliant) nation, the Embassy focused the majority of its human rights efforts on combating trafficking. However, U.S. officials continued to dedicate time and resources supporting human rights and rule of law programs for the military, judiciary and prisons to ensure continued progress in these arenas.

To strengthen the judiciary and better prepare law enforcement officials, prosecutors and the courts to conduct criminal proceedings efficiently and fairly, the Embassy assisted with infrastructure development and training. The United States provided training for prosecutors in utilizing forensic evidence and secured donations for the first-ever forensics laboratory in Belize. In addition, the United States provided \$22,900 to the Magistrate's Court to replace and network all of its computer equipment, which was lost in a fire in 2002. Another \$17,200 was allocated to upgrade and network the computer systems at the office of the public prosecutor and \$14,000 was used for computer upgrades at the Supreme Court.

The Ambassador visited Belize's only prison on several occasions to demonstrate U.S. support for government efforts to improve prison conditions through privatization. Embassy officers regularly visited the prison, monitored conditions and donated books and magazines to the prison literacy program.

Responding to the threat corruption poses to stable democratic practices, embassy officials placed increasing emphasis on anti-corruption programs. In April, the United States funded an anti-corruption seminar attended by representatives from all Belizean law enforcement agencies. The consular section, following a directive from the Secretary of State, cancelled the diplomatic U.S. visa of a corrupt cabinet minister in February 2003. The minister's involvement in the 2002 illegal sale of thousands of Belizean citizenship documents and passports (including some to suspected terrorists and traffickers in persons and narcotics) was well documented. The media's coverage of the story provoked widespread calls for a crackdown on corruption in Belize and provided embassy officials a platform to encourage anti-corruption

efforts. To ensure that the passport system can no longer be manipulated to facilitate issuance of Belizean passports to unknown persons without accountability, the United States provided \$985,000 to implement an automated, machine-readable passport issuance system that is expected to be operational in late 2004.

The U.S. Department of Labor allocated \$105,000 for a comprehensive study of child labor practices in Belize, the first such research in four years. The study, conducted by the International Labor Organization and released in December, indicated an increase in child labor abuses in Belize, particularly in the agricultural sector. U.S. officials worked with government social services to analyze the contents of the report and plan to study the issue more closely in the coming year.

The Embassy capitalized on the high-profile release of the State Department's 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report to bring more attention to anti-trafficking efforts. The Embassy provided the Government with copies of model anti-trafficking legislation, developed in consultation with the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Government of Belize adopted and enacted the legislation in June with only minor changes. The Embassy consulted with Belizean officials to develop a multifaceted action plan to combat trafficking, and at the request of the Belizean Government, an embassy official participated in a newly created task force to combat human trafficking. The Embassy coordinated with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to conduct intensive anti-trafficking training for more than 350 police, prosecutors and social services and immigration personnel. Further training was planned for 2004. At least six persons were charged with trafficking offenses during the last half of 2003, and prosecutors continued to develop their cases at year's end. Embassy officials worked closely with social services to ensure that protections were in place for any identified victims.

Trafficking issues merited widespread coverage in local media. Television and newspapers reported passage of the anti-trafficking legislation as well as subsequent arrests, and reporters generally contacted embassy officials for statements. Anti-trafficking advertisements ran in newspapers and on television, and several major radio talk shows featured trafficking discussions and included speakers at high levels, including the *Chargé d'Affaires*, the Belizean foreign minister and a Belizean ambassador.

## **BOLIVIA**

Bolivia is a multiparty democracy with an elected president and bicameral legislature. The year 2003 was marked by major episodes of social unrest. 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 and flee the country. After a vote in Congress, Vice President Carlos Mesa Gisbert, a former journalist, historian and human rights activist, assumed office and restored order.

There was wide expectation that the new Government would place great emphasis on human rights, given that then-Vice President Mesa had publicly broken with the Sanchez de Lozada administration over its handling of this issue. The new Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, though serious problems remained, due in large part to weak institutions, pervasive corruption, a violent opposition and limited resources. In the previous Government, there were credible reports of abuses by security forces, including use of excessive force, extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention, and mistreatment 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, brutal working conditions in the mining industry and trafficking in persons.

The highest priorities of the United States in Bolivia are to promote political and social stability and to ensure that the police and military are respecting human rights and cooperating with investigations and prosecutions of alleged violations of human rights. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy works to strengthen the judicial system and the rule of law, promote indigenous, workers and women's rights and combat corruption, child labor and potential trafficking in persons. U.S. officials routinely and publicly highlight the need to improve Bolivia's justice system and to make the political system more inclusive. In private, the Ambassador and other embassy officials work 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 Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage hosted a January 2004 Bolivia Support Group meeting in Washington, with the participation of 19 countries and six international organizations.

To strengthen its capacity for monitoring and acting on cases of alleged human rights abuses, such as torture and extrajudicial killings, the Embassy has hired a Bolivian attorney to work exclusively on human rights issues. This attorney works 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 United States continued financial support to the Chimore Center for Justice and Human Rights (CCJHR) in the conflictive Chapare coca-growing region. The Center reported its findings to the Vice Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, disseminated human rights information, accepted and kept records of complaints of abuses, reviewed these complaints with the support of a medical forensic expert and an investigative staff, and referred credible complaints to the Public Ministry. The Embassy plans to expand justice services at the CCJHR and to establish similar multiple-service justice centers in the city of El Alto and the coca-growing zone of Los Yungas.

In response to the violence in February 2003, the United States contributed the services of professional law enforcement, forensic and ballistic experts as well as equipment to an investigation by the Organization of American States. This eventually resulted in an objective official report and 11 indictments by the Attorney General.

Because many of the human rights abuses occurred within the justice system, the Embassy has focused major human rights and democracy efforts in that sector. The Mesa government continued to implement a new Public Ministry Law adapting the prosecutorial function of the judicial system to the requirements of the Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP), one of the reforms supported by the United States in recent years. To date, more than 1,000 police, lawyers, law students, prosecutors, judges and NGO representatives have received training on the new CCP. The Embassy has also provided technical assistance to initiatives undertaken by the Office of the Presidential Delegate to combat public sector corruption and has supported implementation of a Carter Center access-to-information program.

The United States works to support democratic order and social stability in Bolivia in a variety of ways, including U.S. Agency for International Development programs to increase efficacy, accessibility, transparency and the rule of law in municipal government, legislative development, political party reform and anti-corruption. The participation of women and indigenous people is stressed in these programs, and the Embassy is hiring native language-speaking indigenous advisors to help it better understand and broaden links with this large and under-represented segment of the population. As part of the U.S. outreach to the indigenous program, the Embassy has sent various members from the indigenous community and officials to participate in 2003 International Visitor programs on topics such as democracy and civic education. The Embassy has also invited guest speakers and published op-ed pieces on supporting democracy, indigenous issues and fighting corruption. The Embassy Public Affairs Section produces radio programs, news and coverage of significant events in indigenous languages of Quechua and Aymara and created an Aymara publication on key aspects of a U.S.-sponsored 2003 conference on indigenous rights. In 2004 workshops on democratic values are planned for indigenous and Afro-Bolivian groups as well as a CARE-implemented education-based program to promote improvements in political access and responsible civic and political participation among rural and indigenous populations.

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 has offered support to the Government's own human rights database. The Embassy continues to conduct 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 has recently assigned a human rights officer to every command. In 2003, the Embassy assisted the National Police to establish a 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 includes a 40-hour human rights module.

The United States has repeatedly raised with Bolivian officials the need for comprehensive action on trafficking in persons and related child labor and prostitution concerns. The Embassy has promoted passage of a model anti-trafficking law with senior officials and lawmakers. In 2003, the U.S.-based NGO International Justice Mission provided human rights training to police on the rights of street children, while \$1.5 million in funding from the U.S. Labor Department supported a CARE project working to keep the children of Potosi miners in school and out of the mines. The Labor Department is also funding a project to improve workplace safety and to promote tripartite dialogue among workers, businesspeople and the Government. The United States contributes to school feeding programs, and has a public health project to provide medical diagnosis and counseling on sexually transmitted diseases for prostitutes and the general population.

## **BRAZIL**

In October 2002, Brazil's constitutional Government held the fourth general election since the end of military rule in 1985, electing President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and members of the legislature in accordance with the 1988 Constitution. These elections met international standards.

The federal Government generally respected human rights, but the human rights record of some states remained poor. Although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Police continued to commit numerous abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, excessive use of force and other abuses. Prison conditions remained extremely harsh and life threatening. The judiciary was inefficient, often subject to political and economic influences, especially at the state level, and lacked adequate resources. Judicial officials were often poorly trained. In many instances, poorer and less educated citizens made limited use of an appeals process that might ensure their right to a fair trial. Millions of children continued to suffer from the poverty afflicting their families, worked to survive and failed to get an education. Child abuse was widespread and sexual exploitation of children and child prostitution prevalent. International trafficking in persons and internal slave labor were significant problems.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Brazil focused primarily on the needs of children, including protection from abuse and the worst forms of child labor, and on support to the Government's

fight against HIV/AIDS and trafficking in persons. In addition, the Ambassador frequently, in both media interviews and public speeches, addressed the need to strengthen democracy in the Americas and the role of free trade in increasing development and supporting democracy. The Embassy also worked privately with the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and encourage key reforms.

Because children suffered from many of the worst human rights abuses in Brazil, the U.S. Agency for International Development focused its efforts on at-risk youth, designing a program to improve the ability of at-risk and working children and youth to become productive, healthy citizens. This prevention and human rights protection program is implemented by the National Association of Partners of the Americas through the POMMAR Project in Northeast Brazil and in Brasilia. It promotes the effective application of international and Brazilian legislation guaranteeing the fundamental rights of children and young people and strengthens the capacity of local government and NGOs providing protective services to children and youth aged 7 to 18. These young people, either separated from family or parental care and protection or at risk of such separation, are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor in urban areas. Participating children receive a range of benefits: formal schooling, vocational training and access to quality education targeting the prevention and eradication of child labor, human and children's rights promotion, protection against physical, sexual and mental violence, health education targeting early pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and civic education in key democratic skills.

To further reduce child labor and associated human rights abuses, the Embassy worked with the Ministries of Labor, Education and Social Assistance and with President Lula da Silva's National Human Rights Secretary to implement a \$5 million U.S. Labor Department grant targeting child labor in Northeast Brazil. More than \$10 million in additional U.S. funding supported International Labor Organization projects working to combat child labor. In addition, the Embassy sponsored several Brazilian officials to participate in International Visitor programs to the United States, giving them access to a wide range of government, private sector, NGO and academic officials on topics such as affirmative action and promotion of access to justice by members of traditionally excluded groups.

In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Embassy worked closely with the Ministry of Defense and NGOs to thoroughly vet all military units proposed for U.S. training.

Brazil has a significant problem with trafficking in persons. It is a major source country for women and children trafficked into prostitution primarily in Europe and some border countries. Internal sexual exploitation of minors in Brazil is a problem. There is also a significant internal problem with trafficking of men and children into forced labor in agriculture. To assist the Government's efforts to combat trafficking in persons, the United States sponsored a seminar in São Paulo to examine ways to reduce and eliminate

trafficking in persons in Brazil. The seminar was attended by many members of civil society, as well as federal and state government officials. In addition, \$5 million in U.S. funding supports ♦Projeto Educar, ♦ initiated in August 2003 through the U.S.-based NGO Partners of the Americas and targeting the worst forms of child labor in Brazil through programs focused on improvements to basic educational access. This project benefits children working in hazardous agricultural activities as well as those trapped in commercial sexual exploitation.

## **COLOMBIA**

Although Colombia is a democracy, a major internal armed conflict financed by drug trafficking and other criminal activities has created an environment in which serious violations of human rights, almost all of which are committed by guerrilla or paramilitary terrorists, are commonplace. The Government's human rights record remained poor; however, there were significant improvements in some areas. An increasingly small percentage of total human rights abuses reported were attributed to security forces; however, some members of the security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including unlawful and extrajudicial killings. Paramilitary and guerrilla terrorists regularly attacked civilian populations and were responsible for massacres, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, forced displacement and recruitment of child soldiers. The civilian judiciary is independent of the executive and legislative branches but confronts profound challenges from corruption and intimidation by guerrillas, paramilitaries and other wealthy criminal organizations. More significantly, the cumbersome inquisitorial judicial system is overworked and faces serious resource constraints. Impunity from prosecution, therefore, is a threat to the creation of a culture of respect for human rights.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Colombia is both proactive and responsive, tackling the root causes of human rights and religious freedom violations and social unrest while continuing to invest in short-term emergency humanitarian assistance. Key strategic objectives include protection of vulnerable populations, increased access to the justice system, support for judicial reforms and the rule of law (including protection of witnesses and protections and training of human rights investigators and prosecutors), promotion of local governance and peace initiatives, and provision of humanitarian assistance. In April and September of 2003, President Bush discussed with President ♦Ivaro Uribe a broad range of bilateral issues including the importance of continuing progress on human rights and extending democratic security throughout Colombia. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner also raised democracy and human rights concerns with President Uribe in separate visits to Colombia during 2003. During a February 2004 trip to Colombia, U.S. officials discussed the government ♦s plans to demobilize paramilitaries and encouraged the Government to hold demobilized combatants accountable for gross human rights violations and other serious crimes.

Working with the Colombian Ministry of Interior and Justice, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided security protection to 3,145 people and 71 offices under threat. The protection program assists 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 20 regions, allowing it to respond effectively to 177 of 234 alerts and potentially prevent massacres, forced displacements and other egregious human rights violations.

In Fiscal Year 2003, 12 additional U.S.-funded Justice and Peace Houses ♦ one-stop legal assistance and social services shops ♦ were established for a total of 33, handling 1.9 million cases and thereby increasing access to the justice system, particularly for poor and marginalized Colombians. In addition, the United States has helped to establish a total of 28 oral trial court rooms and train 3,421 judges in oral trial procedures, strengthened the office of Public Defense, created 9 new court rooms including five for specialized courts, one for ordinary courts and three mock trial court rooms in three Colombian universities, and 707 individuals were certified as conciliators.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has developed and implemented a multi-faceted strategy to strengthen the Colombian Government ♦s capability to investigate and prosecute human rights cases, providing Colombian judicial police investigators, forensic examiners and prosecutors with the necessary training, technical assistance and equipment to strengthen and upgrade their individual skill levels. The strategy employs 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 the initial criminal investigative stage through final case resolution. In 2003, the Office of the Prosecutor General conducted major operations against guerrilla and paramilitary terrorist/criminal organizations, bringing charges for murder, assault, extortion and drug trafficking. In 2003, DOJ trained 840 police assigned to rural outposts with little or no previous police presence, trained 400 police in accusatory system/oral trial techniques and trained 172 prosecutors, judicial police and judges in trial advocacy. Also in 2003, specialized training and state of the art equipment donations enabled Colombian forensic labs to investigate human rights violations more effectively. This included the enhancement of DNA analyzers and the Combined DNA Index System database, upgrading of the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS), updating of forensic imaging and document analysis systems, upgrading of the automated fingerprint identification system and the design and installation of a wireless network providing inter-agency connectivity and information sharing. Enhanced IBIS testing was used in an investigation in the department (state) of Casanare to link nine separate homicides to the same weapon, resulting in the arrest of one suspect for four of the homicides.

USAID's Peace Program underwent significant change and growth in 2003. 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 Colombian Government and terrorist paramilitary groups, USAID 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 three of the most conflict-ridden municipalities in Colombia. These centers provided communities with a neutral space for dialogue, conflict resolution and social services.

The United States supported small community infrastructure projects through the Alternative Development program. The U.S.-funded Local Governance Program improved the capacity of municipal governments to involve citizens in local decision-making, provide services and manage resources effectively and transparently. These two projects supported the establishment of 630 social and productive infrastructure projects in 64 municipalities and 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 and standardized internal control units in 19 government agencies.

The United States worked to help reform Colombia's criminal justice system in an effort to accelerate the legal process. The United States assisted the Government in drafting a new criminal procedure code to move the system toward an accusatorial system. The draft code is currently under consideration in the Colombian Congress. The United States organized joint accusatory trial technique courses for judges, prosecutors, police, defense attorneys and investigators, and funded visits for judges and legislators to observe the accusatory 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. Over the next three years, the United States will assist the Government in providing training to approximately 3,000 prosecutors, 1,000 judges, 10,000 police investigators and 1,500 defense attorneys. In cooperation with the Colombian Justice Sector High Level Commission, the United States has built 27 trial courtrooms to complement the shift toward an accusatorial system.

Although non-governmental organization (NGO) statistics indicate kidnappings have dropped approximately 30 percent in 2003, 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 Investigations 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 continued to undermine the rule of law. In response, the United States provided training and equipment for Colombian protective force personnel in both the witness and dignitary protection areas, including personnel from the Bogotá mayoral and other government ministerial security details.

The ongoing armed conflict in Colombia has displaced approximately 2.2 million people since 1995. The United States is funding a number of international organizations and NGOs in Colombia that provide emergency humanitarian assistance such as food, temporary shelter, hygiene and household kits, psychosocial attention and health care to newly displaced persons. The United States is also providing mid- to long-term assistance to displaced persons through several international organizations and NGOs, focused on economic reintegration of displaced persons where they reside and a smaller but significant returnee component. Program activities include productive projects, micro-credit programs, vocational training and job placement, health care, shelter, income generation, improved education and basic community infrastructure. Furthermore, USAID has assisted 1,176 ex-combatant and other vulnerable children through their child soldiers program.

Although labor union-related homicides and kidnappings dropped significantly in 2003, violence against labor union leaders and activists continues to be a grave problem, with levels surpassing any other country in the world. Through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center 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 (IPEC). In 2003, almost 3,000 children left their work in low-tech open-pit mines under an IPEC-funded pilot project.

Human rights training is integrated into all U.S.-supported military exercises and operational training conducted in Colombia. Plan Colombia financed advanced human rights, international humanitarian law and operational law training for the military, as well as the establishment of a military Judge Advocate General (lawyer) corps and the Armed Forces School of Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and Military Penal Justice. More than 3,000 military personnel have been trained since these programs began in 2001. The Embassy coordinated interagency human rights vetting of military units proposed for U.S. training and/or support.

Trafficking in persons (TIP) is a significant problem in Colombia. To address this problem, the United States funded an International Organization for Migration program to launch a call center allowing individuals who suspect a TIP scam to phone anonymously about suspicious overseas offers to work. Between July 31 and September 30, 2003, the center received 2,338 calls.

## CUBA

Cuba is a totalitarian state controlled by Fidel Castro, who exercises control over all aspects of life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, the government bureaucracy and a formidable state security apparatus. The Government's poor human rights record worsened in 2003, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. The authorities routinely continued to harass, threaten, arbitrarily arrest, detain, imprison and defame human rights advocates and members of independent professional associations, including journalists, economists, doctors and lawyers, often with the goal of coercing them into leaving the country. The Government used internal and external exile against such persons. The Government denied political dissidents and human rights advocates due process and subjected them to unfair trials. Members of the security forces and prison officials continued to beat and abuse detainees and prisoners, including human rights activists. The Government failed to prosecute or sanction adequately members of the security forces and prison guards who committed abuses. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening, and the Government restricted medical care to some prisoners as a method of control. The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government restricted some religious activities but permitted others. Violence against women, especially domestic violence, and child prostitution were problems. Racial discrimination was a problem. The Government severely restricted worker rights, including the right to form independent unions.

During 2003, the Castro government responded to citizen efforts to bring about democratic reforms by arresting more than 75 activists, independent journalists and independent librarians, subjecting them to summary trials, and sentencing them to between 6 and 28 years imprisonment. These summary trials were marked by a lack of transparency and due process and drew broad condemnation from foreign governments and non-governmental organizations. The defendants were falsely accused of being employees of and having received funds from the United States.

In the face of open hostility by the Cuban Government toward both the United States and pro-democracy activists, the United States has responded to the crackdown by greatly increasing high-level public statements on Cuba's human rights issues and encouraging other members of the international community to address them as well, and continuing moral and material support for Cuban civil society. Public outreach by U.S. officials was a particularly important demonstration of that moral support and of the U.S. Interests Section's determination to continue its efforts.

In the midst of the summary trials of the 75 dissidents, Chief of Mission James Cason spoke on Cuban civil society at the University of Miami, drawing attention to both the crackdown and the efforts of Cuban activists to endure despite repression. Secretary of State Powell and the State Department Spokesman issued press statements demanding the release of the 75 victims of the crackdown and all other political

prisoners. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega made public statements promoting human rights and a democratic transition in Cuba, including an October speech at the University of Miami in which he described both the continuing repression of the Castro regime and the efforts of the United States to promote a transition. Secretary Powell utilized his intervention at the Plenary of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States in June to insist that Cuba be held to the standards set by the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Kim Holmes and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner testified at a special hearing of the U.S. House International Relations Committee in April 2003.

These efforts culminated in President Bush's October 10 speech on Cuba at the White House, in which he firmly condemned the Cuban Government crackdown. The President went on to announce the formation of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, which will work to accelerate the peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba and coordinate U.S. support to a free and democratic Cuban Government. These powerful public statements complemented parallel diplomatic efforts to generate broad international pressure for democratic change in Cuba, building upon the international criticism triggered by the Castro government's harsh repression of peaceful dissidents.

Within Cuba, the U.S. Interests Section continued its activities in support of civil society, despite the high level of harassment by the regime. Under its Enhanced Outreach Initiative, the Interests Section worked to promote democracy, human rights, free-market principles and the development of a civil society. This initiative focused on practical informational programs to promote democratic reforms and strengthen civil society, including projects to support broader and balanced access to objective information.

In addition, U.S. officers follow the cases of more than 350 prisoners of conscience, meet with the relatives of political prisoners as a demonstration of moral support and invite members of civil society to representational events, thereby underscoring the legitimacy of their efforts. On May 20, the Chief of Mission dedicated a monument to Cuban democracy activists at his residence, in an event attended by families of political prisoners. U.S. efforts to meet with Cubans throughout the country were hindered by a government ban on travel by U.S. officials outside of Havana and a prohibition on the commercial importation of books on democracy, economics, business, human rights and other topics.

Nevertheless, the United States successfully distributed news, books, radios, videos and Cuban political and historical literature (otherwise unavailable in Cuba). The U.S. Interests Section also offers Internet access to members of civil society. Officers in the Interests Section also worked to counter government propaganda by briefing visitors from the United States and other countries on local human rights conditions.



To strengthen domestic and international awareness of the human rights situation in Cuba, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor produced a pamphlet on the lack of fundamental freedoms in Cuba entitled "The Dream Deferred: Fear and Freedom in Fidel's Cuba." Available in both English and Spanish, this succinct but comprehensive publication is in the process of dissemination both to U.S. embassies and human rights groups, and will be included in briefings and other public outreach.

Despite government claims of complete religious freedom in Cuba, religious activities remain heavily circumscribed. The U.S. Interests Section offers information to religious organizations on the island. Religious figures from a broad range of denominations, including those not officially registered by the Government, were invited to representational events in recognition of their important roles in society.

Labor rights are severely constrained, and the country's foremost independent labor organizers were jailed during the March 2003 crackdown. The United States worked to disseminate accurate information on international labor standards, as well as the 2003 report of the International Labor Organization's Committee on Freedom of Association citing Cuba's failure to meet internationally recognized labor standards.

The Cuban Government rejected efforts to engage on the issue of trafficking in persons, asserting the United States has no standing to address the problem of child prostitution in Cuba. Although lax oversight at some government-run tourist facilities has contributed to child prostitution, the Cuban Government has refused to recognize or discuss the phenomenon, publish statistics on child sexual abuse and prostitution or conduct public awareness campaigns demonstrating its commitment to combating this form of trafficking in persons.

## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

The Dominican Republic enjoys a democratically elected government headed by Hipolito Mejia. Although there were some improvements in certain areas, the Government's human rights record was poor and serious problems remained, compounded by worsening economic conditions. Weak public institutions at times failed to protect fundamental human rights and enforce the rule of law. Trials were not expeditious, due to cumbersome judicial procedures and understaffed and underfunded justice system institutions without sufficient qualified and motivated judges. Police continued to use excessive force, and unlawful killings increased. Domestic violence continued to be a serious problem. To deal with these concerns, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to increase respect for human rights, strengthen institutions and encourage of free and fair presidential elections. In addition, the strategy addresses police reform, child

labor issues, measures to combat corruption, respect for internationally recognized labor standards and programs to combat trafficking in persons.

U.S. officials routinely highlighted human rights concerns in public speeches. On various occasions throughout the year, Ambassador Hertell stressed the importance of human rights in public and private forums. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega, in an address to the Dominican Congress in December 2003, outlined U.S. policy concerns including human rights, the rule of law, trafficking in persons, building democratic institutions and the need for transparent elections. The U.S. Trade Representative and the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights also raised these priorities in meetings with Dominican government officials during their visits to the Dominican Republic. In addition, in June, the Dominican Republic actively participated in the Dialogue on Democracy hosted by Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky. In this Community of Democracies project, the Dominican Republic worked with other democratic states from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss and develop inter- and intra-regional dialogues, institutions and strategies for the purpose of strengthening the global framework of democracy.

The United States engaged the Government on methods to reduce extrajudicial killings, torture and unwarranted violence by members of the National Police. A Human Rights and Democracy Fund grant awarded in September 2003 will allow for the creation of Police Abuse Reporting Centers in 2004. Through U.S. assistance to human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the National Police Institute of Human Dignity, citizens will be able to submit complaints of police abuse to three reporting centers, which will create an information system to register and channel complaints and profile human rights abuses for research purposes. As a result of this project, human rights violations committed by police will be reduced and more police officers will be sanctioned.

The United States invested more than \$500,000 to assist the National Police in developing a new curriculum for recruits and future officers at the Police Academies. The revised police curriculum includes training on police methods similar to U.S. standards. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Military Assistance and Advisory Group worked closely with the Armed Forces to vet military units for U.S. training and checked candidates with other embassy offices.

The United States promoted the rule of law in the Dominican Republic by supporting implementation of judicial reforms. U.S. technical assistance supported a survey of the cost of implementing the 2002 Criminal Procedures Code, which will be fully effective in September 2004. With U.S. assistance, in November 2003, the Supreme Court of Justice issued several resolutions requiring the National Police to obtain an arrest warrant from a competent judicial authority before arresting or detaining a suspect, except for persons caught in the act of committing a crime. Also in November, the Attorney General's office

issued a resolution requiring that a defendant have counsel at all phases of criminal proceedings and that police and prosecutors inform defendants of their rights upon arrest.

U.S. technical assistance and training also strengthened the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system. To reduce the backlog of pending cases, the United States assisted in creating a public defense program whereby the Government appointed 14 public defenders and two investigators and processed 1,052 cases in 2003. The United States provided technical assistance to the Prosecutorial School for the development of a Public Ministry Career Statute. The statute, published in July 2003, established a professional mechanism for selecting attorneys appointed through a civil service system.

In May and September 2003, the United States provided training on prosecuting money-laundering cases. Funding from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance Training provided training for 60 Dominican judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers.

To encourage participatory democratic practices within political parties, the United States sponsored Dominican participation in civic education and exchange programs in the United States. In February and March 2003, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in partnership with the National Democratic Institute, funded five young community activists who attended a seminar in Washington on political party leadership. Upon their return to the Dominican Republic, the participants implemented local projects to bolster democratic processes within their respective parties. The United States also funded a program to promote women's participation in politics. The program focused on methods to encourage women as voters and as candidates for office.

The Embassy was deeply engaged in promoting democracy. The United States is seeking to fund international election observers through the Organization of American States to ensure transparent, fair elections in May 2004. Through U.S. assistance to NGO partners, 6,000 Dominican volunteers were also selected and trained to observe the elections.

To address the reported upsurge in domestic violence, the United States sponsored a project to prevent domestic and gender-based violence in the Dominican Republic. USAID provided technical assistance to help raise public awareness about the issue. Once fully implemented, the project will assist the Women's Secretariat to develop guidelines for accreditation and regulation of model women's shelters. The United States also sponsored training in the United States for Dominican women with disabilities.

Throughout the year the United States continued to encourage strong government support for efforts to eliminate child labor, dedicating more than \$3 million over a five-year period to multi-year programs. A U.S. Labor Department-funded project targeted the worst forms of child labor in the sex industry, tomato-producing provinces, coffee growing areas and hazardous agriculture provinces. U.S. funding for these

programs also included an educational component to sensitize parents and school-age children to the physical and sociological risks of child labor and to promote school attendance. As a result of U.S. assistance, in September the Ministry of Labor declared one of the targeted areas as "free of child labor."

The United States engaged the Government in a robust campaign to combat trafficking in persons. USAID funded an NGO partner to help draft comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation, which was passed by the Dominican Congress in July and signed into law by President Mejia in August 2003. In addition, USAID missions in the Dominican Republic and Haiti received a grant to study the problem of Haitian children trafficked to the Dominican Republic. The United States also provided technical support to a newly created trafficking unit at the National Police. At the Embassy's urging, a trafficking unit was created in the Attorney General's office. Additionally, the United States funded several training courses for National Police members, prosecutors and judges on implementing the new law against trafficking in persons. In September 2003, a grant was approved to develop a curriculum at the USAID-supported Judicial School to improve processing of trafficking in persons cases. The United States continued to meet with key officials to encourage prosecution of traffickers.

## **ECUADOR**

Although Ecuador enjoys a democratically elected government that generally respects human rights, its weak government institutions, widespread corruption and limited resources contributed to human rights abuses. There were credible reports that security forces committed killings using unwarranted lethal force; however, the number of killings by security forces declined significantly in 2003 and members of the security forces faced 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 nearly half of the detainees in jail had not been sentenced formally. Violence and pervasive discrimination against women, indigenous people and Afro-Ecuadorians remained problems. Child labor remained a problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to help strengthen the judicial system and the rule of law, promote human rights education, improve the media's effectiveness, combat the use of child labor and potential trafficking in persons, and assist Colombian refugees. In February 2003, President Bush discussed with President Lucio Guti rrez a broad range of bilateral issues including the shared commitment to democracy, good governance and protection of the human rights of migrants. U.S. officials advocated respect for democratic institutions and stronger workers' rights.

The judicial system of Ecuador is plagued by inefficiency and corruption that undermines the rule of law and hinders speedy and fair trials; the United States supports a number of projects to strengthen judicial

effectiveness and fight corruption. Judicial reform programs funded through the State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided approximately \$2 million to help train police, prosecutors and judges in the proper application of Code of Criminal Procedures, including investigations, evidence handling, proper conduct of trials and internal controls against corruption and malfeasance. The United States continues its support for Gutierrez's anti-corruption campaign.

With U.S. assistance, Ecuador has established its first national inter-institutional commission to advance criminal justice reform, which has already set priorities for reforming the Code of Criminal Procedures and training justice workers. The United States also provided training in oral procedures for 500 Ecuadorian judges and prosecutors. To strengthen an inadequate public defense service, USAID provided funding of more than \$100,000 to expand citizens' access to justice, especially that of minor children and other members of vulnerable populations.

A wide range of U.S. programs support 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 helped the Government establish a new anti-corruption system promoting greater transparency in government contracting and greater public sector disclosure, and sponsored Ecuadorian participants in programs providing in-depth looks at the administration of justice, responsible policing, anti-corruption and grass roots democracy in the United States. U.S. journalism experts were brought to Ecuador to teach local members of the media techniques for effective and professional investigative journalism. In celebration of International Human Rights Day, the Embassy designed and implemented an innovative educational outreach program around the concept of individual liberty, one that reached students across the country. The Embassy also distributed posters of the U.S. Bill of Rights in English, Spanish and Kichwa, the most common language among indigenous in Ecuador. USAID strengthened local government effectiveness and transparency in 15 municipalities, including the establishment of citizen audit committees to oversee implementation of local assistance projects.

Spearheaded by SOUTHCOM Commander General James T. Hill, military-to-military contacts 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. training and/or support, and human rights training was integrated into all U.S.-supported military exercises and operational training conducted in the country.

USAID established two programs to fight sexual and domestic violence against women and children. A program in Ecuador's five most populous provinces created institutional oversight mechanisms of legal

processes in sexual crime cases to improve transparency in prosecutions, while in Quito a domestic violence and gender program worked to improve the city's monitoring of domestic violence cases.

The U.S. Labor Department supported government efforts to combat child labor, providing more than \$2 million to the International Labor Organization for 2003-2006 programs to combat the worst forms of child labor in Ecuador, through projects in the agriculture and construction sectors and targeting the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. The United States advocated the strengthening of Ecuador's labor laws, 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 response to U.S. requests, for example, the Government formed an independent commission that investigated the Government's response to a 2002 strike by banana workers.

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. Potential trafficking in persons was targeted through assistance to government efforts to dismantle alien smuggling organizations, where cooperation between U.S. and Ecuadorian officials led to the arrest of several alien smugglers. The United States also provided equipment for airports and border crossings to allow authorities to better monitor travelers.

The number of Colombians applying for refugee status in Ecuador almost doubled between 2002 and 2003. To help this vulnerable population, the United States 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.

## **GUATEMALA**

Guatemala held open and transparent elections in November and December of 2003. While there have been major advances in human rights since the end of the civil conflict and signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, state institutions charged with enforcing the rule of law remain weak and serious human rights problems persist. There were credible reports of killings by individuals linked to security forces and of politically motivated killings by non-state actors. Security forces kidnapped, tortured, abused and mistreated suspects and detainees. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detentions were problems. Judges and other law enforcement officials were subjected to intimidation and corruption. Impunity was pervasive, although efforts to reform the judiciary continued. Members of the media were targets of attacks, threats and intimidation. Attacks on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights workers by unidentified persons decreased during the year.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to encourage and support the new Government's efforts to strengthen state institutions, civil society groups promoting human rights and an innovative UN proposal to investigate clandestine groups believed to be involved in attacks on human rights workers.

U.S. officials, including Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky and Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega, highlighted human rights concerns during meetings with President Alfonso Portillo, members of Congress and other high-level officials. Florida Governor Jeb Bush also raised human rights with President Oscar Berger during the inaugural visit. 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. The Ambassador also attended important human rights trials and publicly promoted human rights and its defenders on several occasions. From its genesis as a proposal from civil society, the Ambassador has championed the proposed UN Commission to Investigate Clandestine Groups (CICIACS). The United States provided support to NGOs that formed a "Coalition in Favor of CICIACS," and an agreement was signed between the United Nations and the Government to create the CICIACS on January 7, 2004. The Commission will use international experts to investigate and prosecute cases involving human rights abuses, organized crime, official corruption and narcotics trafficking in Guatemalan courts. It awaits Congressional approval and Constitutional Court review.

Following the release of a March 2003 MINUGUA report documenting the use of torture by state agents against three narco-traffickers in Rio Hondo, the Ambassador urged the Minister of Government and the Minister of Defense to investigate the allegations and punish any Government officers found to be responsible. The ministers agreed to take measures to prevent any recurrence of torture, but no known action was taken to sanction individuals responsible for this incident.

The United States provided a total of \$2.8 million and fielded approximately 40 official observers under the Organization of American States ♦ Electoral Observation Mission for the November and December 2003 rounds of the general election. The United States is now considering providing technical support to the new Congress and assistance for the negotiation of electoral reforms to increase voter participation.

The United States continued to support (\$4.2 million over three years) grassroots human rights promotion, including training local human rights promoters, media campaigns, targeted support for the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (limited training and equipment) and support for the Human Rights Movement, a coalition of human rights NGOs. A key Movement leader, Frank LaRue, was appointed by President Berger to lead the Presidential Human Rights Commission in January 2004. It is encouraging that since 1996 civil society has blossomed in Guatemala and is now a major contributor to the new Government's human rights policies. Under this program, the United States also supported with \$250,000 a media and

NGO campaign to raise public awareness of the recommendations of the Historical Clarification Commission, five years after it issued its report. Since 1999, the United States has provided \$4.3 million to fund exhumations of clandestine cemeteries dating to the civil conflict and mental health assistance for victims. The United States also funded negotiations between civil society and the Government to create a National Reparations Plan, which was established to compensate victims of the civil conflict.

To improve 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 oral debate in pre-trial hearings and administrative reforms to promote efficiency and transparency in judicial operations. The United States provided material support to the Guatemalan Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Human Rights Workers. The Embassy sent journalists, government officials and civil society leaders on International Visitor programs in 2003 to study human rights, democracy and investigative journalism.

In 2003, the U.S. Labor Department announced a four-year, \$6.7 million regional project to promote labor rights education and strengthen labor inspectorates in Central America. 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; the U.S. Trade Representative held hearings on open GSP labor petitions in October. In all these exchanges, U.S. officials expressed concern about the need for the Government of Guatemala to fully investigate past violence against trade union leaders, reform its labor justice system and reinstate workers illegally fired for unionizing activities. In November, the Embassy expressed concern to the Government over the potential for anti-union violence at a maquila where a new union, the third in the sector, had been organized. The Government responded quickly and violence was avoided. The Government successfully encouraged the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements at the Choi Shin/Cimatextiles plants, which became the first two such agreements to take effect in this sector.

The United States supported the creation of a Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination Against Indigenous Groups in 2002. The United States also supported a National Indigenous Congress held in August 2003, which promoted indigenous political participation through the creation of a National Indigenous Assembly, currently in formation. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) participates in a donor dialogue on indigenous issues to prevent duplication of efforts.

To foster more professional security forces and reduce human rights abuses, the Embassy and SOUTHCOM encouraged the Defense Ministry to incorporate human rights training into the Army's Civil Affairs curriculum. Partly as a result, the Minister of Defense opened a human rights office in June 2003



and provided it with permanent staff. Members of SOUTHCOM's Human Rights Division visited Guatemala in February 2004 and met with high-ranking Guatemalan officials, including the Minister of Defense, to discuss the Guatemalan military's formal commitment to implement a regional human rights initiative. In 2004, USAID will provide \$600,000 to the UN Development Program to strengthen civilian-military relations.

Guatemala was rated a Tier II country in the State Department's 2003 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report to Congress. U.S. officials briefed the Government on the implications of the report in July 2003, and urged the Government to step up its efforts to prevent, prosecute and punish this crime. In response, the Government formed an inter-institutional group, composed of ministries, Congress, the Attorney and Solicitor General's Offices and the judiciary, to better coordinate these efforts. At the Embassy's urging, the Attorney General authorized the creation in 2004 of a new anti-TIP prosecution unit in the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Women. The United States worked closely with Guatemalan immigration officials to track down victims of trafficking in brothels in and near the capital. Several underage victims were found, and arrests were made of traffickers that remain to be prosecuted. The Embassy has urged the Government to stiffen sanctions against traffickers. The United States has supported an NGO providing job training to victims of trafficking and is considering supporting a regional victim support network of NGOs.

## **HAITI**

The political impasse and violence rising out of controversial elections in 2000 continued to undermine democracy and respect for human rights in Haiti during 2003. The Government's human rights record remained poor, with political and civil officials implicated in serious abuses. There were credible reports of extrajudicial killings by members of the Haitian National Police (HNP). Police officers used excessive and sometimes deadly force in making arrests or controlling demonstrations and were rarely punished 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. Prison conditions remained poor, and prisoners with valid release orders continued to be held in defiance of these orders. 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 remained problems. Internal trafficking of children and child domestic labor remained a problem. Endemic corruption, a deteriorating judiciary and worsening economic and social conditions exacerbated this situation.

In this difficult political environment, U.S. efforts in 2003 focused on promoting the rule of law (including steps to combat the impunity enjoyed by human rights violators), fostering an environment where Haitian citizens know and exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities, strengthening local capacity to

monitor human rights situations and protect victims and encouraging government action to combat the trafficking of children.

In the first two months of 2004, escalating tension between opposition demonstrators and pro-Aristide gangs, at times with the support of the HNP, resulted in numerous deaths. On January 31 President Jean-Bertrand Aristide accepted CARICOM'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 any steps to implement the prior action plan, despite numerous assurances that he was committed to its implementation. Moreover, Aristide's government continued to condone and sometimes participate in human rights abuses, including violent suppression of legitimate and peaceful dissent. Anti-government armed rebels mounted a major insurgency in early February, ultimately resulting in Aristide's resignation and departure from Haiti on February 29, 2004. U.S. human rights and democracy strategy following these events has supported the processes laid out in UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1529 and CARICOM's prior action plan.

Among other actions, UNSC Resolution 1529 authorizes immediate deployment of a Multinational Interim Force (MIF) to restore order in Haiti and facilitate provision of humanitarian assistance, supports establishment of conditions allowing the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and other international organizations to help the Haitian people, and mandates coordination with the OAS Special Mission and UN Special Adviser on Haiti to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The MIF now numbers approximately 2,500, more than half of which is composed of U.S. forces.

In an effort to expedite implementation of the prior action plan following Aristide's departure, the United States has formed an interagency group to coordinate rapid response efforts to reconstruct democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Haiti. Given the security and political situation on the ground, initial focus will be on reconstructing the criminal justice system (including police, judges, prosecutors and prisons), disarmament of all nongovernmental forces, supporting the interim Government, restoring now-defunct local governments, providing technical and material support to establish a Central Electoral Committee, supporting human rights organizations, and supporting reconciliation, reconstruction and social reintegration efforts. Additional medium-term projects will include election observation assistance, political party development, legislative reform and decentralization.

During 2003, embassy officials promoted the rule of law in Haiti through frequent high-level meetings and public statements that emphasized 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. In public statements, Ambassador Foley constantly condemned politically motivated violence, stressed the importance of general respect for the human rights of all Haitians and

urged the Government to protect its citizens' right to demonstrate peacefully. Through the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), the United States also conducted seminars and workshops for more than 40 civil society organizations advocating the rule of law and judicial independence during the year. Among other benefits, this program resulted in the formation of a new federation of bar associations. Partnering with IFES, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided funding to a local human rights organization, the Committee of Lawyers for the Respect of Individual Liberty, to create a telephone hotline to document cases of human rights abuses.

Through the International Visitor (IV) Program, the Embassy sent more than 50 attorneys, civil society leaders, journalists, scholars, government officials and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives from Haiti to attend seminars in the United States on policy development, human rights practices and advocacy, women's rights and conflict resolution. An estimated 800 Haitians benefited from follow-on programs implemented by IV participants, including a weeklong series of lectures on human rights and a two-day forum on conflict resolution that drew crowds of civil society representatives from one of the poorest and most violent slums in Haiti.

Ongoing expressions of U.S. support for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms included the mission's press conference and public delivery of the State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices to leaders of prominent human rights NGOs. Embassy officers also visited jailed human rights and student activists to press for their release in addition to the homes of victims of abuse to obtain personal accounts of human rights violations.

Working through the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, the United States provided training for political parties across the spectrum and for Haitian NGOs to strengthen political development. Also, the United States funded training to civil society groups, including student organizations and women's groups. The United States funded a civic action website "Haiti Get Involved," training on political opinion polling and the founding of a resource center to document and disseminate anti-corruption policies and the best practices of state and private entities.

Child labor in Haiti, especially internal and external trafficking of children as domestic workers or "restaveks," remained a U.S. focus in 2003. Embassy officials worked with the Government to address this problem, which led to the passage of national legislation prohibiting child trafficking and the introduction of a law prohibiting trafficking of all persons. Mission collaboration with the Government also led to the creation of a specialized police unit, the Brigade for the Protection of Minors, which was designed to investigate, arrest and prosecute cases of suspected child trafficking. USAID provided more than \$700,000 in funding to the Pan-American Development Foundation to implement an anti-trafficking program to shore up government efforts.

## HONDURAS

President Ricardo Maduro, elected in November 2001 elections that domestic and international observers judged to meet international standards, heads Honduras's constitutional Government. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, but there were serious problems in some areas. Members of the police were accused of committing extrajudicial killings. Human rights groups accused former security force officials and the business community of colluding to organize "death squads" private and vigilante security forces that are believed to have committed a number of extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, particularly of youth. Administration of justice was problematic due to an inefficient, understaffed and underfunded police force, Public Ministry (prosecutors) and judiciary, all of whom were subject to corruption and political influence. There was considerable impunity for members of the economic, military and official elites. Prison conditions remained harsh, and detainees often did not receive due process. 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, including victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to strengthen respect for human rights and the rule of law, promote transparency and combat child labor and trafficking. U.S. officials and public diplomacy outreach have publicly highlighted the need for improvements in human rights conditions in Honduras, particularly the rule of law and administration of justice. Secretary of State Powell discussed human rights and democracy issues during his meetings with senior Honduran government officials in Tegucigalpa on November 4, 2003, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Kozak raised serious concerns over extrajudicial killings and trafficking in persons during his November consultations with senior officials in Tegucigalpa. The Embassy also worked privately with Honduran government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions and other organizations to encourage key reforms and discuss areas of particular concern. The Embassy also sent various civil society leaders and government officials on International Visitor programs in 2003 and 2004, on topics such as the administration of justice and the rule of law, anti-corruption, civil society and democracy, and journalism.

The Embassy has dedicated \$100,000 in counternarcotics assistance funding from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) to support the "Si Se Puede" government program for youth at risk. Coordinated by the Vice President's office and implemented with the assistance of NGOs, police, community leaders and teachers, this project works in vulnerable communities to discourage drug use and gang membership. Many of the youth in this program are at risk of becoming victims of violence if they join gangs.

Embassy human rights and democracy promotion efforts focused mainly on the rule of law and administration of justice, with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) providing \$3.1 million in 2003 to support administration of justice reform efforts. Significant assistance over the last several years has been spent in 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. Through USAID, the United States also funded the training and distribution of materials for judges, prosecutors, public defenders and forensics experts. U.S.-funded pilot courts in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula were able to complete an impressive total of 373 trials and closed another 4,905 cases through administrative means. The Supreme Court created a "purging unit" with U.S. funding that worked to clear backlogged cases dating before implementation of the new code, and has already reduced the backlog from 125,000 to 49,000 pending cases. The Honduran Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations, working with USAID assistance, has played a dynamic role 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 foster a more professional police force and reduce human rights abuses, the Embassy has also provided \$200,000 to support a Police Internal Affairs Office for three years. This office investigates complaints, including those from private citizens, and recommends appropriate actions ranging from administrative disciplinary action to criminal charges for substantiated complaints.

A coordinated effort to support transparency and anti-corruption efforts by the Government has received \$600,000 in U.S. funding for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 implementation period. USAID's program activities include capacity-building for the Government's Superior Audit Institution, the development and implementation of a Transparency and Anti-Corruption Public Awareness Campaign, the strengthening of independent national and local anti-corruption organizations and support to civil society social auditing efforts to provide oversight and monitoring of the use of public funds. The Embassy has encouraged the Government, including the Attorney General's office, to vigorously pursue cases of corruption and particularly those involving government officials.

With national and municipal elections set for 2005, the United States continued to promote democracy through the development of transparent and accountable democratic institutions. USAID programs to increase the capacity for basic service delivery by municipalities and promote decentralization, including technical assistance to the Honduran Association of Municipalities, received \$3 million in funding during FY 2003. USAID supported its partner, the Foundation for Municipal Development, in the capacity building of 46 municipal governments. In many cases, these projects demonstrated a positive correlation between the transparency and accountability with which municipal governments are being administered and the growing confidence that citizens have in the performance of their local governments, thereby strengthening public faith in their democratic governance and democratic processes.

Particularly important, given the recently signed U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement, U.S. officials have repeatedly engaged government, private sector and labor union officials on the importance of enforcing labor law and ensuring that core labor rights are protected. The U.S. Department of Labor funded a number of longer-term regional projects that benefited Honduras, including efforts to strengthen labor systems in Central America (◆Cumple y Gana,◆ \$6.75 million in 2003-2007), promote freedom of association, collective bargaining and industrial relations for Central America (RELACENTRO project, \$1.87 million in 2001-2004), as well as a regional occupational safety and health project (CERSSO, \$6.6 million from August 2000 to March 2004). A \$6.3 million USAID-funded regional Labor Component (2002-2007) supports efforts to improve the functioning of regional labor markets while strengthening the protection of core labor standards through the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration. In addition, USAID provided \$8 million bilaterally and \$20 million regionally for other trade-related capacity building.

In compliance with the Leahy amendment and in coordination with SOUTHCOM◆s regional emphasis on human rights and humanitarian outreach, the U.S. Military Group worked closely with the Ministry of Defense to vet military units for U.S. training and promote respect for human rights. Members of the Honduran military on visitor exchanges met with U.S. officials in Washington to discuss civil-military relations and the importance of human rights and rule of law.

Child labor remains a significant problem in Honduras. From 1995 to 2003, the United States provided more than \$37 million to the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Eradication of Child Labor and other organizations, funding projects for Central America and the Dominican Republic to combat and gather information on the worst forms of child labor, including the sexual exploitation of children and their use in melon and coffee production.

Honduras is a source and transit country for trafficking in persons (TIP) for sexual and labor exploitation. Most victims are young women and girls, many of whom 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 and a State Department official as keynote speakers at government-organized seminars on the prevention and eradication of commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in women and children. Through \$350,000 in INL Police Assistance funding, the Embassy supports efforts by the Frontier Police to prevent and interdict the transportation of illegal immigrants and the trafficking of persons. Additional funding will provide U.S.-implemented training in 2004 for Honduran police and prosecutors investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons.

## **JAMAICA**

Jamaica has a mixed human rights record, and successive governments have struggled to respond to the high rate of crime, violence and drug trafficking with strong police action. Police shootings are frequent, especially in the course of apprehending suspects. In October 2003, the UN Special Rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions reported to the UN Commission on Human Rights that extrajudicial executions by the police had occurred and that the legal system was not equipped to handle such cases. U.S. officials work closely with the Jamaican Government and civil society to emphasize the need for improvements and to increase Jamaica's ability to ensure the security and the human rights of its citizens. The U.S. strategy is to build capacity within the police and military and address the rights of children and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

In 2001, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) released a study that examined ways for Jamaica to reduce its homicide rate. The report contained 83 separate recommendations that culminated in a plan of action for improving the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). The PERF recommendations called for reforms at all levels of the police force, but particularly emphasized the need for administrative changes. The JCF has accepted all but two of the PERF's recommendations.

To assist Jamaica in building a more professional police force, the United States provided \$500,000 to support a Law Enforcement Development Advisor position (LEDA) within the JCF. The LEDA is tasked with providing strategic policy advice to assist the JCF with implementation of the PERF recommendations. Working through the office of the JCF Commissioner, the LEDA has 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 will draft 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 LEDA is attempting to create a police force that is proactive, productive and welcomed throughout Jamaica. In December 2003, the JCF instituted a new policy on officers' use of deadly force. Under the new policy, supervisors will be held responsible if their subordinates use force in an unlawful way and do not take all possible measures to prevent such incidents. The new policy conforms to a series of suggestions by the LEDA. Finally, using the expertise of the LEDA, the United States is seeking 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 will benefit.

In 2002, the Narcotics Affairs Section provided the JCF with firing simulators, which are now installed at the JCF training academy as part of the police-training program. The simulators use computer programs to create real-life scenarios encountered by police officers and measure their ability to respond appropriately while improving their discretionary shooting methods.

On the community level, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing a \$3.5 million grant to develop a community-based anti-crime program in the once-embattled Grants Pen neighborhood of Kingston. The grant provides the JCF with training in community policing and confidence-building. Local police are being taught methods to promote safe encounters with citizens, and community members are receiving training in mentoring and problem solving.

Jamaican human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work in a variety of areas to educate and protect citizens from abuses. With U.S. assistance, the Independent Jamaica Council for Human Rights developed, produced and distributed 1,000 human rights coloring books for use in Jamaican primary schools. The books list ten inherent rights and their corresponding responsibilities. Both rights and responsibilities are illustrated and allow primary educators to incorporate human rights into a school's curriculum.

In an effort to strengthen the capacity of the legal system, USAID provided 23 case management systems to Jamaican courts. These systems greatly increase the ability of the local judiciary to hear cases. Other projects increased the level of training for court reporters in an effort to increase the efficiency of record taking and storage. The United States provided funding to establish an online database of all Jamaican laws, which serves as a valuable reference point for citizens requiring legal information and increases their access to government.

In 2003, the Military Liaison Office spent approximately \$661,000 on its International Military Education and Training Program, sending some 50 members of the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF) to the United States to receive training. Both JDF officers and enlisted personnel participate in these programs, which include human rights instruction. This training prepares enlisted personnel who assist local police units in patrolling high crime areas of downtown Kingston, and includes units on basic leadership, due process, civilian control of the military and the role of the military in a democratic society. Courses aimed at senior military officers highlight 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. Cooperation between the Jamaican and U.S. militaries, particularly the Embassy's provision of training and supplies in disaster management and preparedness and emergency medical services, has also yielded benefits to local communities in Jamaica.

Embassy officials remain in dialogue with Jamaican officials and civil society regarding respect for the rights of women, children and people with disabilities. Through the Ambassador's Fund for HIV/AIDS, the Embassy awarded grants to nine Jamaican non-profit organizations to help reduce discrimination against persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Among the projects was a training session for student nurses and health care professionals working with people living with AIDS. Another project



involved a community radio station, which helped to increase sensitivity toward AIDS patients by increasing the station programming dedicated to HIV/AIDS topics to five hours per week.

As the Jamaican Parliament began consideration of the Child Care and Protection Act, embassy officials met with relevant government ministries, NGOs and parliamentarians to push for strong protections for vulnerable youth. Conversations focused on a clause of the bill prohibiting the trafficking or sale of minors. Embassy officials met individually with members of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee considering the bill to highlight the importance of combating trafficking. They also attended committee meetings, networking with NGOs and representatives of local and international organizations to highlight the need for strong enforcement mechanisms against child traffickers. Members of the Committee agreed to substantial increases in the penalties for trafficking in minors, thereby sending a strong message to the public that the Jamaican Government would punish those guilty of exploiting the most vulnerable members of society. U.S. officials press for vigorous enforcement of the laws against trafficking, encouraging Jamaican authorities to investigate cases and prosecute offenders.

In cooperation with the Jamaican Government and the International Organization for Migration, the Embassy is in the final stages of implementing an international entry/exit system, which will assist in the battle against trafficking in persons. This system, which is scheduled to begin processing passengers in Spring 2004, will enable the Jamaican Government to monitor international arrivals and departures and allow local and international law enforcement agencies to examine travel patterns to determine trends pertaining to trafficking in persons. By analyzing entry/exit data, the Government will be equipped to focus its efforts, saving time and resources in the process. The project also includes important training components, including seminars on human trafficking. By combining infrastructure with training, the Embassy is increasing Jamaica's awareness of trafficking and providing officers and officials the tools to combat the problem.

## **PERU**

Emerging from a decade of authoritarian government, Peru is engaged in a process of democratic transformation. President Alejandro Toledo has affirmed that strengthening democracy and protecting human rights are among his top priorities, and the human rights situation has continued to improve under the present Government. There is general respect for press freedom, an increasingly important role for civil society and a commitment from the Government to reform to judiciary, police and military. Nonetheless, judicial inefficiency and corruption, problems with public security forces and poor prison conditions contributed to human rights abuses. Police were accused of unwarranted killings and abuse of detainees. There continued to be allegations of torture and abuse of military recruits and of prisoners. Impunity for past crimes remained a problem, and security forces sometimes harassed victims or other witnesses to keep

them from filing charges. Violence against women and children and discrimination against persons with disabilities, indigenous people and racial and ethnic minorities continued. Labor advocates argued that labor laws restricted collective bargaining rights; however, a 2002 law addressed some of these problems. Child labor remained a serious problem in the informal sector. Trafficking in persons was a problem. Perhaps even more dangerous is a growing public perception that democracy has not delivered.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Peru is to promote decentralization and judicial reforms and to strengthen the efficiency and credibility of the national Congress in coordination with broader regional efforts as part of the Andean Regional Initiative. The United States has supported the work of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), efforts to fight child labor and child sexual exploitation and programs to promote greater awareness of democracy for and political participation by historically marginalized groups. The Embassy also continued to sponsor an innovative public schools program promoting a culture of lawfulness as well as ongoing democracy and anti-corruption discussions that included both government and civil society participants.

During June meetings with President Toledo and other officials, the Special Envoy for Western Hemisphere Initiatives urged continuing efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and processes, cited the importance of press freedom and encouraged continued support to anti-corruption initiatives. Embassy officials and high-level delegations, including Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Kozak in January 2004, continue to raise these and other human rights issues both in public statements and private discussions with government officials and civil society.

In addition, in June, Peru actively participated in the Dialogue on Democracy hosted by Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky. In this Community of Democracies project, Peru worked with other democratic nations from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Peru worked with other democratic states from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss and develop inter- and intra-regional dialogues, institutions and strategies for the purpose of strengthening the global framework of democracy.

Over a five-year period, the United States will dedicate \$20 million to judicial sector reform, conditioned on political performance and continued political will. The election of a new, pro-reform Supreme Court president in January 2003 provided a positive signal of progress. The United States provides technical assistance to a wide range of democratic institutions including the judiciary, the Congress, the Ministry of Justice, the National Judicial Council and the Judicial Academy. Implementation began with the creation of an improved examination process for permanent judicial appointments, an assessment to reduce caseload in the Lima courts and establishment of an oversight program to evaluate judicial performance.

A \$2.1 million U.S. program to promote efficiency through internal reforms in the National Congress began in 2003, and has already helped reduce the number of congressional committees, establish a center for parliamentary research in Congress and provide direct technical assistance to congressional commissions debating essential reforms and working on draft legislation to reform the justice sector and the penal system, strengthen the Congressional Ethics Commission and establish new laws for municipalities and promote decentralization.

Regional/municipal elections in late 2002 led to the creation of new regional governments in January, with newly elected mayors ♦ many in office for the first time ♦ assuming their positions at the same time. Throughout 2003 and early 2004, the United States provided technical assistance and support to these newly elected officials, including critical training in essential functions such as budget preparation and responsible management of social programs newly transferred to the regions by the central government. U.S. assistance in the installation of a standard nation-wide financial management system should lead to a more transparent, uniform budgetary process throughout the Government.

In addition to key structural reforms, Peru needs to come to terms with its violent, anti-democratic past in order to mature as a democracy. To this end, the United States was the largest single donor to Peru ♦s TRC, providing more than \$2 million to the Commission and to assist victims. Modeled on similar commissions that had worked successfully in other countries undergoing transitions from dictatorship to democracy, the TRC analyzed the political, social and cultural conditions that fostered an era of violence between May 1980 and November 2000. It submitted its report to President Toledo in August and is turning over the names of alleged human rights violators for investigation.

The Commission found that more than 69,000 Peruvians had lost their lives during this 20-year period, the vast majority Quechua-speaking indigenous persons from rural areas, and identified the Maoist guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso as most responsible for the violence and the deaths of the greatest number of innocents. At the same time, the report recognized that Peru ♦s vast social and cultural divisions ♦ combined with weak democracy and underdeveloped institutions ♦ had left society vulnerable to a movement like Sendero and the violent, sometimes excessive, counter-response by some members of the military. U.S. assistance programs are designed to respond to many of the recommendations on institutional reforms in this report.

President Toledo embraced the report and formally apologized to the victims of the violence in a December 9 speech, announcing a \$814 million "Peace and Development Plan" for those regions most affected by the violence and pledging educational outreach and the creation of a multi-sectoral committee to monitor ongoing efforts to reconcile citizens and heal the vast social and cultural gulfs that had led to the rise of

Sendero. Compensation for victims and their families through free education, low-cost housing and psychological support was also offered.

The United States promoted additional structural reforms through several initiatives. A model curriculum for junior high students, implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Education and based on living within a culture of lawfulness, is now in its third year. The United States worked to support ongoing restructuring of the police force, funding the establishment and training of a police Internal Affairs Group to investigate allegations of corruption and human rights violations as well as the human rights training of police officers, including training in non-lethal crowd control. 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.

Outreach and public awareness programs robustly supported structural reform efforts in Peru, including International Visitor programs focused on decentralization, journalism, the media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). U.S. grants, speakers and public video conferences with U.S. and Peruvian experts promoted better public awareness of race relations, domestic violence and anti-corruption issues. 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. The Embassy has also supported and monitored U.S. programs to combat child labor in Lima and in the mining sector.

Trafficking in persons in Peru had appeared a troubling but relatively small problem, with official cases in the single digits each year. However, the Government recently acknowledged the gravity of the country's trafficking problem and is taking significant steps to eliminate it. The United States supports these efforts, including the Government's establishment of a new multi-agency anti-trafficking working group, comprehensive new anti-trafficking legislation slated for expedited consideration in 2004, and the creation of a new anti-trafficking unit in the Ministry of Interior in January 2004. U.S. funds support a new Organization for International Migration project in coordination with the NGO Movimiento El Pozo and the Peruvian Immigration Department to establish an anti-trafficking in persons hotline, a public awareness campaign and additional research on the issue.

## **SURINAME**

The Government of Suriname, headed by President Ronald Venetiaan, is still in the process of consolidating democratic and constitutional rule, and May 2000 elections were generally judged to meet international standards. 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. The judiciary was ineffective, and a shortage of judges resulted in a huge

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, trafficking in women remained a problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy is to strengthen Suriname's weak law enforcement institutions and to address critical human rights issues in broader programs targeting HIV/AIDS, health, education and micro-economic development. 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 officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and promote systemic reforms.

To foster professionalism and strengthen respect for the rule of law, U.S. experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Customs and other agencies trained local law enforcement officials (including police, customs officials, prosecutors and judges) in anti-corruption, joint police intelligence and undercover techniques and best practices. The United States supported the Government's establishment of a new financial intelligence unit and provided additional funding through the regional Caribbean Anti-Money Laundering Program. Law enforcement officials from Suriname were trained in the United States and elsewhere, and two Surinamese judges visited the United States to observe U.S. judicial processes and meet with counterparts.

A Fulbright Senior Specialist assigned to the local university taught a human rights course to undergraduate and graduate students, including key policymakers. Another Fulbright Specialist at the university provided approximately 20 seasoned professors with student-centered instructional techniques to foster critical thinking rather than rote memorization. The success of this program encouraged a local institute to incorporate these techniques in its own teacher-training course. In 2003, the Embassy held an e-commerce workshop for local businesswomen and sponsored two Surinamese women for International Visitor programs centered on "Multiculturalism" and "Women in Business." Approximately 60 Peace Corps Volunteers promoted human rights and democratic values through their work with marginalized groups in education, health and micro-economic development programs.

The United States promoted greater attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS, dedicating more than \$425,000 to programs by the Government and local NGOs that worked to fight discrimination toward persons infected with HIV/AIDS, provide technical assistance (voluntary counseling and testing training and surveillance methods) and promote institutional capacity building. The Ambassador's Fund to Combat HIV/AIDS supported public awareness campaigns by four local NGOs and cosponsored national consultations on HIV/AIDS. This allowed the completion of a National Strategic Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS, which will strengthen Suriname's appeal for funding from the Global Fund. The Peace Corps contributed directly to

these efforts by assigning at least ten volunteers to work primarily on HIV/AIDS-related projects. The Ambassador met privately with officials to relay concerns about HIV/AIDS, and penned an op-ed on the issue that received front page coverage in local dailies.

The United States worked to promote military professionalization and to support humanitarian efforts by the Surinamese Armed Forces to actively enhance the welfare of their citizens. Seventeen military officers and noncommissioned officers (vetted in compliance with Leahy legislation) received training in legal and border patrol issues.

Trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation remains a serious concern in Suriname. The United States strongly and consistently urged government action against trafficking in persons and funded a two-year program to assist Suriname in that fight. In response to these efforts, the Government established an anti-trafficking commission (composed of various ministries and a local NGO, and headed by the Ministry of Justice and Police) to study the problem. The Government also launched a public education campaign against trafficking in persons using public service announcements obtained from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The Public Prosecutor's Office and the police established a registry of all brothels and their employees by nationality and established a "special victims' unit" and a telephone hotline in May to handle all cases from the commercial sex industry. In cooperation with police, they also worked to expand existing services for victims of domestic violence to meet the needs of victims of trafficking.

## **VENEZUELA**

Venezuela remained embroiled in a political crisis over the government of President Hugo Chávez, elected in July 2000 in generally free and fair elections. The democratic environment suffered from deteriorating rule of law and weakened institutions that were increasingly subordinated to political interests. Respect for political rights continued to be of special concern as opposition groups petitioned the National Electoral Commission to convoke a recall referendum on President Chávez's rule. The Government's human rights record remained poor. Political violence and intimidation against opposition political parties, the media, labor groups, the courts, the Catholic Church and human rights groups were common and often carried out by government sympathizers inspired by the rhetoric of President Chávez and other government officials. Both the International Labor Organization and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions identified violations of core worker rights. The police and military continued to commit numerous abuses, including extrajudicial killings of criminal suspects. Arbitrary arrests, detentions and torture of detainees persisted. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. Impunity, one of the country's most severe human rights problems, allowed corruption and extreme inefficiency to flourish in the judicial system. Child labor increased as economic conditions worsened, and violence against women and children remained problems.

The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy in Venezuela supports political rights while continuing to fight human rights abuses. The Embassy worked to encourage the implementation of Organization of American States (OAS) Resolution 833, which calls for a constitutional, democratic, peaceful and electoral solution to the country's political crisis, and to strengthen democratic Venezuelan institutions, encourage communication and dialogue and oppose violence and extra-constitutional changes in government through a variety of programs.

To discourage extrajudicial killings and torture committed by the country's public security forces, the United States sponsored several training programs for law enforcement officials that incorporated vital rule of law and human rights concepts. During the second half of 2003, six Venezuelan officers participated in a ten-day counterterrorism seminar in the United States, three officers attended terrorism and police management training by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), one officer went to a three-month leadership course at the FBI Academy and three attended the "Latin American Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar." The Embassy Legal Attaché also organized a two-week course on terrorism crime scene investigations for 50 participants and a one-week anti-kidnapping seminar for another 40 participants.

The Embassy continued to promote the strengthening of democracy, rule of law and political rights through U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGOs). U.S. funding to National Democratic Institute (NDI) activities promoted transparency in the electoral process through domestic observation, political party democratization and renewal, and assistance to municipal anti-corruption initiatives. To accomplish these objectives, NDI worked with a consortium of civil society groups spanning the political spectrum to provide quality control in the electoral process, including administrative procedures and media reporting, and with the full range of political parties to promote party reform and modernization. The International Republican Institute (IRI) complemented these efforts through outreach to political parties across the political spectrum in the execution of electoral campaigns. IRI's training emphasized the development of campaign strategies and effective communication of party platforms to voters as well as the development of a volunteer observers' trainer network to observe, assess and report on electoral processes. The United States provided additional support to the Carter Center's continuing mediation and electoral process observation efforts and to NGOs working to promote local political dialogues and informed public discussions on issues such as education, to train community and civil society leaders in democratic leadership, mediation and conflict resolution, and to enhance organized labor outreach to the informal sector at the grassroots level.

Public statements by the Ambassador and other U.S. officials, including Members of Congress, reiterated strong support for OAS Resolution 833 as the way out of Venezuela's political crisis. The embassy website and other public diplomacy outreach bolstered this coordinated effort, ensuring wide distribution of

relevant remarks by Washington policymakers and OAS officials to the media and public. In addition, the Embassy arranged a digital video conference (DVC) on the California gubernatorial referendum, spurring detailed discussion of a possible Venezuela referendum.

U.S. public outreach programs in Venezuela worked to strengthen the administration of justice and prevent human rights abuses in the country. These included a DVC on judicial ethics and the sponsorship of five expert speakers on various aspects of the administration of justice as well as a one-week workshop on "Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Prisons" conducted by an expert trainer in conflict resolution. Participants, who represented all sectors of the judicial and penal systems, followed up on their workshop experience by creating a sustainable network for continuing professional collaboration. In late 2003, the United States sponsored an additional expert speaker on victim protection, and funded an International Visitor program on "Human Rights and Prison Reform."

The United States provided more than \$718,000 for programs to strengthen civil society and democratic institutions that worked in key sectors such as justice and human rights, transparency in government, media and freedom of expression, conflict management and community activities to foster dialogue among polarized groups. One of these projects, designed to raise public awareness and respect for human rights, conducted human rights workshops for leaders of key societal sectors and distributed printed materials detailing national and international mechanisms for protection of human rights. Another grant promoted democratic discussion between government and opposition parties in the National Assembly on topics such as freedom of expression, facilitated by an international expert.

Especially relevant due to the standoff between government and private media were U.S. efforts to support a free and democratic press. The Ambassador hosted a Press Freedom Day event to highlight the importance of free speech, a message backed by U.S. grants that emphasized the importance of an impartial media, allowing all candidates to have air time during elections, media regulatory systems and the need to allow for democratic coexistence among those with opposing viewpoints. The Embassy also arranged a DVC on the role of the media in a democracy for pro-government and opposition-affiliated journalists, and regularly issued press statements in support of freedom of expression and against the use of violence by any party for political ends.

In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Embassy worked to vet military units and law enforcement personnel candidates for training and assistance, ensuring no beneficiaries of U.S. assistance had committed human rights abuses. The Embassy's human rights officer also met regularly with contacts in the private sector and within the Government to foster support for human rights and track significant areas of U.S. and international concern.



To assist women's efforts to overcome discrimination and violence, the Embassy and Vital Voices Global Partnership cosponsored a kickoff workshop for women business and community leaders. The Vital Voices worldwide network helps women organize themselves to address a range of issues, including leadership training, coalition building and the fight against trafficking in women and children. The Embassy also cosponsored a one-day conference on proposed changes to the Domestic Violence Law that would have reduced legal protections for battered women and children. Conference participants produced a written argument (amicus brief) against the proposed change for presentation to the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court.

The United States also works to strengthen immigration controls and mitigate alien smuggling and trafficking in persons, and in 2003 sponsored Department of Homeland Security anti-fraud training for 300 Venezuelan employees from airlines, airport security and the immigration/passport agency. The Government has no anti-trafficking information campaigns and has not fully funded the existing network of women's shelters run by Inamujer. To address this issue, the United States independently provided the International Organization for Migration with copies of the State Department's anti-trafficking brochure "Be Smart, Be Safe" for distribution to airlines and other institutions. These brochures are also distributed to the public through the Embassy's Non-Immigrant Visa Unit.

### **2003 Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award Winners:**

This second annual edition of *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record* presents a picture of how we are fully engaged worldwide with people and institutions dedicated to building freer societies. Wherever there is oppression, we find people determined not to let it stand. Sharing their commitment, we respond to human rights violations by offering encouragement to all, seeking out those who can use our support and creating opportunities to help those who ask for our assistance.

This is not an easy task, particularly in countries that have truly earned inclusion in this report because of the severity of abuses perpetrated by their governments. Even in those challenging environments, we do all we can to penetrate the darkness and silence that governments impose in order to preserve their hold over their people. Constantly monitoring the situation, using our own resources and drawing on the work of others, we act on signs of change in these countries and seek new avenues and new opportunities to engage.

The annual Human Rights and Democracy Achievement 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.

In 2003, I was pleased to announce the selection of **Mr. Philip Kaplan** of Embassy Ankara and **Mr. Ted Burkhalter**, formerly of Embassy Tashkent, as co-winners of the year's award for exceptional achievement in the field of human rights and democracy. Messrs. Kaplan and Burkhalter were selected from an impressive group of 15 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.

**Philip Kaplan** was cited for his outstanding analytic skills and policy sense and for his effective and creative efforts to spur democratization in Turkey. Mr. Kaplan's role in lobbying for a verdict in the Manisa torture case not only resulted in a rare occurrence of incarceration for convicted officers, but also influenced legal reform for the statute of limitations on torture. His push for anti-trafficking in persons measures aided in Turkey's movement from Tier III to Tier II placement, and his insightful analysis of issues with Turkey's Kurdish population resulted in pressure on the Government of Turkey to avoid repeating past human rights abuses. Mr. Kaplan was also singled out for his consummate professionalism in raising human rights issues as well as for his reporting on political reforms, which enabled the U.S. Government to focus support on Turkey's EU candidacy.

In one of the most challenging human rights environments, **Ted Burkhalter** demonstrated innovation, persistence and reporting of the highest quality. He was cited for excellent work that is believed to have saved lives and brought real movement toward democracy in Uzbekistan. Mr. Burkhalter established weekly human rights roundtables, which then led to weekly opposition roundtables. The roundtables resulted in a more coordinated human rights community and an activated opposition. He worked for the protection of persecuted evangelical Christians, the registration of human rights groups, and proper treatment for detainees, even those of extremist Islamic organizations. Mr. Burkhalter ensured that every congressional delegation to Uzbekistan raised human rights issues with the Government of Uzbekistan.

Choosing winners of the 2003 award was made a greater challenge because of the number of superior candidates nominated, all of whom deserve praise and gratitude:

**Louis Crishock** of Embassy Belgrade created and maintained an extensive list of contacts from Serbia's ethnic communities and coaxed them away from boycotting the elections. He was also instrumental in the process of Serbia accounting for its past.

**James Garry** of Embassy Lusaka was cited for his timely, policy-oriented reporting and his dedicated efforts to assist the anti-corruption movement in Zambia. He directed a long-term approach to programming that focused on strengthening the Zambian legislature.

**Mary Glantz** of Embassy Baku made significant contributions to democracy through her work with the Azerbaijan elections, including organizing hundreds of international observers and attempting to ensure the election met international standards. Ms. Glantz was cited for her attention to detail, drive, patience and insightful analysis.

**John Godfrey** of Embassy Ashgabat demonstrated insight, determination and courage in the face of backsliding in Turkmenistan. In the area of policy development, Mr. Godfrey's valuable actions and analysis were key to demanding an end to the politically motivated exit visa regime and harassment of religious minorities.

**Peter Harding** of Embassy La Paz was recognized for his much-needed efforts to work with indigenous communities in Bolivia. His reporting during the recent crisis was praised as balanced, credible and authoritative.

**John Haynes** of Embassy Rangoon was cited for his passion, energy, perseverance and excellent sense of timing and discretion. He created a large network of contacts, worked for TIP reforms, and played an important role in prisoner releases and improvements in prison conditions.

**Elizabeth Horst** of Consulate Lahore engaged the embassy in a wide range of human rights issues, including creating a program to provide legal materials to impoverished districts. She worked for religious freedom, encouraged women's projects and urged the Government of Pakistan to hold free and fair elections.

**Ian McCary** of Embassy Cairo was cited for his excellent analytical, linguistic and communications skills and his work on the case of Saad Eddin Ibrahim. He contributed substantial energy and initiative to the NGO sector and to the promotion of religious freedom.

**Ian Sheridan** of Embassy Panama demonstrated intellectual honesty in reporting that was praised as clear and outstanding. He organized one workshop for indigenous leaders and another for TIP issues, and he contributed comprehensive reporting on labor, child labor and economic development issues.

**Lynne Tracy** of Embassy Kabul was cited for her exceptional and perceptive reporting and for her insight into critical events. She ensured that human rights were addressed by the military, and she worked quickly to keep Washington informed of developments with the new Afghan constitution.

**Ian Turner** of Embassy Minsk worked to encourage religious and media freedom in Belarus. He was cited for his excellent reporting and his efforts to expand the embassy network to include members of minority and endangered groups.

**Scott Woodard** of Embassy Manama demonstrated superior interpersonal skills and excellent reporting abilities. He played a key role in creating reforms that moved Bahrain from a Tier III to a Tier II category for trafficking in persons, and he also was instrumental in efforts supporting judicial reform.

**Ricardo Zuniga** of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana was cited for his comprehensive reporting and on-the-money strategic analysis. His work with human rights groups and activists in Cuba was substantial.

*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.

Lorne W. Craner,  
Assistant Secretary of State  
for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

