

OVERVIEW AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

Why the Reports Are Prepared

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended. The law provides that the Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate by February 25 “a full and complete report regarding the status of internationally recognized human rights, within the meaning of subsection (a)...in countries that receive assistance under this part, and...in all other foreign countries which are members of the United Nations and which are not otherwise the subject of a human rights report under this Act.” The report represents events for the calendar year 2015 only.

The Department has also included reports on several countries that do not fall into the categories established by these statutes and thus are not covered by the congressional requirement.

In the 1970s the United States formalized its role as an advocate for the promotion and protection of human rights. In 1976 Congress enacted legislation creating a Coordinator of Human Rights in the Department of State, a position later upgraded to Assistant Secretary. Legislation also requires that U.S. foreign and trade policy take into account countries’ human rights and worker rights performance and that country reports be submitted to the Congress on an annual basis.

How the Reports Are Prepared

The Department of State prepared this report using information from U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, foreign government officials, nongovernmental and international organizations, and published reports. U.S. diplomatic missions abroad prepared the initial drafts of the individual country reports, using information gathered throughout the year from a variety of sources, including government officials, jurists, the armed forces, journalists, human rights monitors, academics, and labor activists. This information gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service personnel regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuses.

Once the initial drafts of the individual country reports were completed, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), in cooperation with other Department of State offices, worked to corroborate, analyze, and edit the reports, drawing on their own sources of information. These sources included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, experts from academia, and the media. Bureau officers also consulted experts on worker rights, refugee issues, military and police topics, women's issues, and legal matters, among many others. The guiding principle was that all information be reported objectively, thoroughly, and fairly.

These reports are a resource for shaping policy; conducting diplomacy; and making assistance, training, and other government-related resource allocations. The reports serve also as a basis for U.S. government cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights.

The Country Reports on Human Rights Practices cover internationally recognized civil and political rights, including those set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as worker rights. As a whole, these include the rights not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; to prolonged detention without charges; to disappearance or clandestine detention; and to other flagrant violations of the right to life, liberty, and the security of the person.

Universal human rights seek to incorporate respect for human dignity into the processes of government and law. All individuals have the right to nationality and the right to enjoy basic freedoms, such as freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, movement, and religion or belief, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or gender. The right to join a free trade union is a necessary condition of a free society and economy. Thus the reports assess key internationally recognized worker rights, including the right of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, the prohibition of forced or compulsory labor, the status of child labor practices, the minimum age for employment of children, discrimination with respect to employment, and acceptable work conditions.

DRL uses hyperlinks to other key human rights documents produced by the Department of State. Specifically, readers are asked to follow hyperlinks for complete information on religious freedom issues by consulting the *International*

Religious Freedom Report and the *Trafficking in Persons Report*. Additionally linked are the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* report and several current publications produced by the Department's Consular Affairs Bureau on international child abductions, if applicable to the country in question.

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