



| EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC





The promotion of democracy and human rights in East Asia and the Pacific has been complicated by the efforts of several Asian nations to legitimize human rights abuses under the rubric of fighting terrorism. This phenomenon has slowed the transition to democracy across Asia, but has by no means reversed the trend. The United States continues to be deeply disturbed by the deplorable human rights records of the North Korean and Burmese regimes. Overall, failures in the rule of law and the lack of transparent, functioning democratic institutions remain serious problems across parts of East Asia and the Pacific, as do military and government abuses of human rights.

Democracy and human rights policy in the region is an important part of USG efforts to improve our bilateral and multilateral relations in the region. In addition to normal bilateral meetings with Asian interlocutors, the U.S. sponsors long-running Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam. The State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) currently funds a substantial number of programs in China and Tibet that seek to address the systemic challenges to democracy and rule of law. It also funds programs in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Cambodia, as well as an ASEAN-wide program. These programs support documentation of human rights abuses to promote accountability and transparency, local governance, and the rule of law in East Asian and Pacific nations. Our goal in Asia is to encourage governments in their transition to democracy and free and fair elections. The Administration pursues peaceful policies to cope with separatist movements in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and elsewhere that threaten to destabilize the region. The Administration also continues to speak out against the brutal repression and human rights abuses seen in several of the region's nations.

"Time and again, experience has shown that countries which demonstrate high degrees of respect for human rights also are the most secure and the most successful. Indeed, respect for human rights is essential to lasting peace and sustained economic growth, goals which Americans share with people all over the world."

Secretary Powell,
Release of Country Reports
on Human Rights Practices
for 2001
March 4, 2002

PESANTREN TRAINING IN INDONESIA

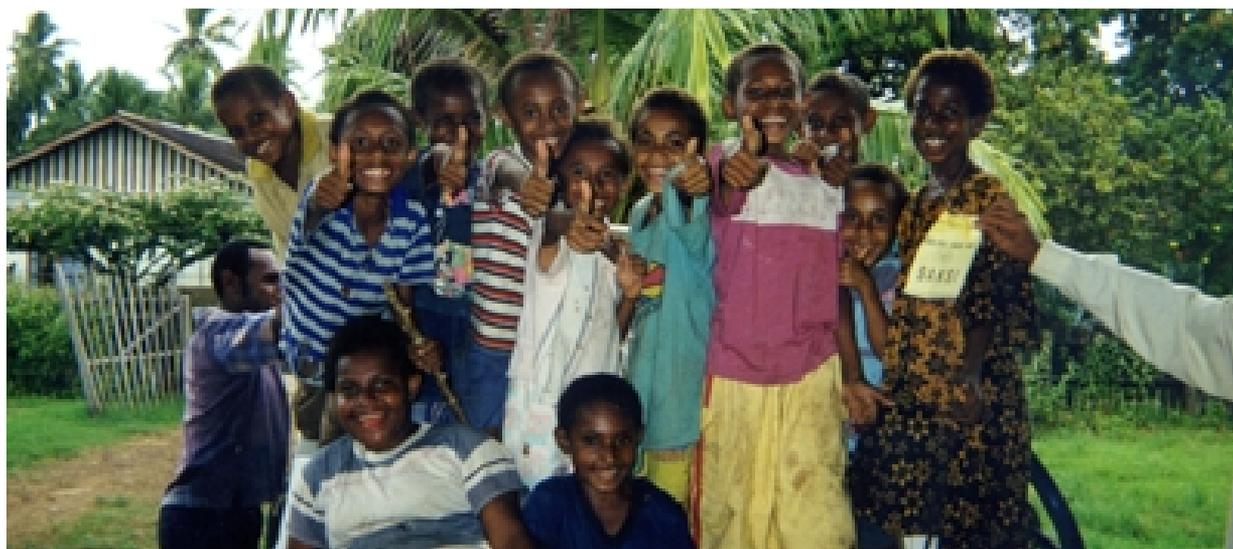
Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) are influential community institutions in Indonesia. Nationwide, there are about 5,000 nationwide and approximately 30 of those are nationally recognized and draw students from all over Indonesia.

By tradition Pesantren heads (Kiayi) are political leaders of their communities as well as religious leaders, and they have deliberately created strong networks between their schools. Large Pesantren often directly influence the populations in places where their “satellite” Pesantren are located. Several Kiayi have gone on to become regional governors. Our goal is to help them gain the experience, skills and means to achieve a vision of more inclusive community leadership, including leadership in their schools, and a vision of a more civil and secular approach to education.

Most Kiayi in Indonesia do not adhere to fundamentalist Islam. However, because of the closed nature of Pesantren and their limited exposure to outside ideas, the schools are highly susceptible to funda-

mentalist influences. In addition, Pesantren have become an even more important institution in Indonesia since the economic situation has worsened. As public schools shut down, more parents than ever are turning to Pesantren for their children’s education, increasing their influence in communities and the nation.

This Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) project has brought 25 Kiayi to the U.S. to visit public, private and parochial schools and community groups and governments to look at democratic leadership and educational norms in action. Kiayi were trained in participatory democracy, civic education, human rights, secular curriculum development, and school administration. After their return to Indonesia, the Kiayi worked with an Indonesian democracy non-governmental organization to propose projects to increase community participation in their Pesantren. Each project was funded through a second HRDF project. The group will participate in follow-up workshops over the next year, to learn from one another’s projects.



BURMA

The United States' human rights and democracy strategy for Burma advocates respect for human rights and rapid political change. We have worked with like-minded countries to maintain maximum international pressure on Burma, pending reform. That pressure includes continued trade, investment, and travel sanctions; the denial of any form of aid, with the exceptions of humanitarian assistance and support for democratic movements opposed to the current dictatorship; continued public criticism of Burma; and outreach programs focused on democratic values, human rights, and good governance. It also includes support for international efforts to foster change in Burma, through the missions of UN Special Envoy Razali and UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Pinheiro, as well as the efforts of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other international organizations.

In coordination with the European Union (EU) and other states, the United States has imposed numerous sanctions on Burma. These include an arms embargo; a ban on all new U.S. investment in Burma; the suspension of all bilateral aid, including counternarcotics assistance; the withdrawal of Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) privileges; the denial of Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and EXIMBANK programs; visa restrictions on Burma's senior government officials; and a hold on all new lending or grant programs by the international financial institutions. We have also

maintained our representation in Burma at the Chargé d'Affaires level since 1990.

Burma continues to be hostile to all forms of political opposition. The U.S. has encouraged UN efforts to free the approximately 1,300 political detainees. This effort has resulted in the release of over 500 political prisoners and the re-opening of opposition political party offices. Aung San Suu Kyi was also released from house arrest. U.S. officials have also personally interviewed victims of political violence during travels throughout Burma and facilitated access for other such U.S. investigations into human rights abuses. Furthermore, the USG maintains frequent contacts with influential members of the political opposition regarding initiatives that will affect the struggle for democracy in Burma.

The U.S. Government promoted the rule of law and democracy by providing exchange programs and information on protection of human rights and civic education. In 2002, the U.S. dedicated over \$200,000 to speaker programs, exchange programs, publications and other information outreach. Furthermore, the USG's direct teaching program offered tuition waivers worth \$8,000 to 33 students denied the opportunity to study because of their political beliefs. In addition, we provided \$4.0 million in support of the Burmese democratic opposition in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002. These funds are programmed through the National Endowment for Democracy and others and focus on democracy and capacity-building activities and for the collection and dissemination of information on democracy and human rights.

The U.S. urged the Burmese regime, which has not allowed domestic human rights groups to function independently and is hostile to outside scrutiny of their human rights record, to accept visits by international human rights organizations. Amnesty International completed its first visit to Burma in 2003.

When the Burmese government categorically denied that its soldiers had been involved in any of the rapes they were accused of committing, the U.S. investigated, called the Government to account at a public press conference, and continued to press for an international investigation of the charges, posting U.S. findings on the Department of State's website.

The U.S. has co-sponsored annual resolutions at the U.N. General Assembly and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights that highlight and draw international attention to the continued human rights violations in Burma.

Throughout the year, the U.S. continued to encourage the Government to allow workers' rights, unions, and discontinue its use of forced labor. We supported the establishment of a liaison office of the ILO in Burma, which was eventually permitted by the Government, and which made efforts to bring the Government into compliance with its international labor obligations.

CAMBODIA

The promotion of democracy and good governance and continued improvement of human rights are two of the United States' main foreign policy objectives in Cambodia. Cambodia's human rights record remains poor, although there have been improvements in some areas. Official corruption, a flawed judicial system, and a culture of impunity have exacerbated the situation.

U.S. officials collaborated closely with civil society, international organizations, government officials, and international and local human rights NGOs in monitoring and advocating better respect of human rights and in developing and implementing U.S. Government-funded programs in support of these aims.

The U.S. has supported for several years activities of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-CAM), an organization that investigates and documents the crimes against humanity committed by the former Khmer Rouge regime.

Through The Asia Foundation (TAF), the U.S. supported a number of local NGO partners in investigating hundreds of alleged abuses of human rights and provided directed intervention and legal services and other assistance to over 100,000 individuals. One such NGO provided public defender services to over 95% of the courts in Cambodia, while another monitored prisons and uncovered and continued to investigate alleged baby selling for foreign adoption. Other NGOs advocated new criminal and civil codes, monitored and assessed the activities of the legislative branch, contributed



PHOTO: IFES

to the drafting of scores of new laws providing greater human rights protections, and educated thousands of local officials on good governance, rule of law and due process.

Again through TAF, the U.S. supported local NGOs' efforts to promote democratic institutions, engage electoral authorities to promulgate fewer inconsistent and contradictory regulations and create a more level electoral playing field, and promote equal media access for political parties contesting national elections. One grant will establish and support 22 Internet-enabled community information centers throughout the country to assist in monitoring, investigating and reporting of human rights cases throughout the country. In early 2002, the U.S. and local NGOs effectively advocated the removal of regulations that would have resulted in censorship of voter education material in local elections held in February 2002. Consequently, NGO partners conducted thousands of village-level voter education meetings and drama performances, distributed 700,000 copies of a non-partisan voter guide, and broadcast a series of voter education announcements on radio and television. TAF's technical assistance and capacity-building of Cambodia's local election monitoring organizations resulted in the deployment of more than 33,000 domestic observers at 12,400 polling stations during the Commune Council elections. Our NGO grantees, including the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), provided further support for monitoring, post-election assessments, good governance training for elected officials, and advocacy programs for civil society and civic education programs.

The U.S. Government also funded an American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) project that provided union leader training and legal aid to more than 300 garment union leaders and activists in the principles of union building. We played a key role in drafting and ensuring the implementation of new regulations that provided greater protections to unions and created Cambodia's first labor arbitration council. Our Embassy intervened and secured the release two union leaders imprisoned for six months on unsubstantiated charges based on inadequate evidence. Grants to the International Labor Organization (ILO) 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 in the salt, rubber and fishing industries.



PHOTO:IFES

Another U.S. grant to TAF supported NGO activities in the areas of prevention of human trafficking, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers. Additional grants to the International Organization of Migration (IOM) supported a mass media anti-trafficking campaign and community network building across all provinces of Cambodia, as well as a long-term recovery and reintegration program for Cambodian trafficking victims returning from Thailand. Our interventions in June 2002 helped convince the government to abandon a policy of prosecuting Vietnamese trafficking victims as illegal immigrants.

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 U.S. Government 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 privately with Chinese officials, NGOs, and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and encourage systemic reforms. Finally, the U.S. supports a wide range of programs designed to improve human rights conditions in China by strengthening the judicial system and furthering the rule of law, encouraging democratic political reform, promoting respect for freedom of religion, protecting human rights, includ-

ing worker rights and women's rights, improving transparency in governance, and strengthening civil society.

The U.S. Government works continually to secure the release of Chinese prisoners of conscience. The Ambassador and other officials regularly raise specific cases in meetings with Chinese officials. In 2002 and early 2003, the Government of China released a number of high-profile prisoners of conscience who were the subjects of such lobbying. For instance, Tibetan ethnomusicologist Ngawang Choephel; Tibetan Jigme Sangpo, China's longest serving prisoner of conscience; China Democracy Party co-founder Xu Wenli; and political activist Fang Jue were released to the United States. Other prisoners of conscience, including four Tibetan nuns, also gained early release from prison after being highlighted in U.S. appeals.

The United States funds a multi-million dollar program to promote legal reform and encourage judicial independence; to increase popular participation in government; and to foster the development of civil society in China. Under this program, more than a dozen projects are currently under implementation. Some of these projects, for example, focus on strengthening the provision of legal services and enabling average citizens to seek protection under the law. Others 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. In addition, the Embassy awards small grants to members of China's NGO movement, in support of democratic values.

During the year, U.S. lobbying helped facilitate visits to China by the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Senior officials continue to call upon the Government of China to enter into dialogues with the Vatican and the Dalai Lama; emissaries of the Dalai Lama visited Tibetan areas of China twice in 2002, the first such visits in decades.

The U.S. called for reform of those elements of the Chinese labor code that do not meet international standards. Officials are working to establish programs of technical assistance that could advance worker rights in the areas of labor law and mine safety. Officers of the U.S. Mission in China also work 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. Government engages in an ongoing Human Rights Dialogue with the Government of China. During the December 2002 session, the Government of China agreed to invite, without conditions, the U.N. Special Rapporteurs for Religious Intolerance, Torture, and Education, as well as the Chairman of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, to visit China.

During 2002, the Ambassador and senior officials worked to strengthen the flow of information concerning human rights within the U.S. Government, with the Chinese and with like-minded governments. The U.S. attended the third Bern

Process meeting of China's dialogue partners to share information about human rights strategies and human rights, rule of law, and democracy programming. The U.S. Mission in China also brought internationally recognized speakers to address Chinese audiences on topics including democracy, human rights, religious freedom, and rule of law.



FIJI

Fiji's human rights and democracy environment in 2002 was still colored by rule of law concerns, a legacy of the May 2000 coup and hostage-taking in Parliament. The 2002 legacy included ethnically divisive rhetoric from political leaders, ongoing investigations into persons allegedly involved in the May 2000 events, and a government that is not fully complying with Fiji's constitution. The USG concentrated on addressing ethnic divisions in Fiji, aiding its return to full constitutional democracy, establishing and maintaining dialogue with religious groups, and trafficking in persons concerns.

The USG focused on convincing the Government to announce publicly that it would abide by the decision of the Supreme Court on an upcoming Constitutional case on having a multi-party Cabinet — whatever that Court decision might be. Prime Minister

Qarase obliged early in the year and continued to hold to that position throughout 2002. This decision will have a great impact on the issues of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in Fiji.

The USG has close contact with and easy access to all major political parties, from the working level to the very top. When incidents of racial name-calling occurred in Parliament, for example, the USG was able to discuss the matter with the Speaker of Parliament, the de facto leader of the opposition, and leading figures in the government party.

Public diplomacy efforts throughout 2002 focused increasingly on human rights and democracy-related topics.

International Visitor Program visitor Esther Williams, for example, has directed the University of the South Pacific's ground-breaking efforts to create meaningful election data from field surveys and grassroots polling conducted by USP ((??)) students during the past two national elections.

The USG undertook a broad range of contacts with religious groups in Fiji in 2002. For example, consular, political and economic officers all called on Muslim leaders during the year, and the Embassy Charge d'Affaires made a point of calling on Muslim League leaders within the first few weeks of his arrival.

The USG continues to search for more and better sources of information regarding trafficking in persons in Fiji. The USG also enjoys close working relations with the major trade unions, academics, legal experts, women's rights advocates, and the major churches in Fiji.



PHOTO: IFES

INDONESIA

Indonesia furthered its transition to democracy in 2002 while experiencing continued challenges on the human rights front. The military and police committed widespread violations, including extrajudicial killings and torture, and justice systems all too often failed to hold violators accountable.

USG efforts focused on encouraging military reform and accountability, promoting respect for human rights and developing civil society. We worked to help professionalize the police, fight trafficking and child labor, and foster religious tolerance. Our extensive assistance programs supported free and fair elections, strengthened political parties and civil society, reached out to religious groups and empowered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in protection of fundamental human rights.

In an aggressive and far-reaching program, USG officials advocated regularly with GOI officials at all levels, monitored court trials of indicted human rights violators and met frequently with victims, NGO workers, women's empowerment groups, students and others. We encouraged accountability for atrocities in East Timor, pressed for greater respect for human rights in the troubled provinces of Aceh and Papua, and urged systemic changes to improve the legal system. We summarized our findings in a comprehensive and thoroughly revised Human Rights Report, an in-depth International Religious Freedom Report and a substantial report on the worst forms of child labor.

At the highest levels, we pursued justice for the August 2002 killings of two American citizens in Papua. At a number of courts, including those under the Ad Hoc Tribunal for Human Rights in East Timor, we monitored trials closely and conferred frequently with human rights lawyers, judges and prosecutors. We encouraged the GOI to establish efficient, accountable and impartial justice-sector procedures. In the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi, where violence between Muslims and Christians had left thousands dead, the USG supported the peace process through advocacy with senior officials and engagement with the affected communities. We made similar efforts in Aceh, where a 25-year-old rebellion has torn the province apart, and Papua, where separatist sentiment has simmered for decades.

The USG promoted reform and respect for human rights within the police and military. The DOJ implemented a Civil Disturbance Management Training project with the police, after which police showed greater restraint in managing crowds. Through our Transition to Democratic Policing project, we encouraged police to be more responsive to the community. Our Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET) program educated civilians in the role of civilian oversight of the military in a democracy. In addition, we met regularly with Indonesian military officials and encouraged military reform.

We helped the Aceh branch of the National Human Rights Commission document killings, beatings, abductions and other severe human rights abuses. USG

support for the Committee for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras), totaling almost half a million dollars, bolstered its campaign against torture and disappearances. In Papua, our assistance to the Institute for Human Rights Studies and Advocacy (ELSHAM) financed investigations into grave human rights violations.

USG programs provided technical assistance to legislation that authorizes the first direct presidential election in Indonesian history. We helped the Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI) make progress toward changing the draft Citizenship Law, which in its earlier form discriminated against Chinese Indonesians. The USG supported efforts by international democracy NGOs to professionalize political parties. We played a key role in setting up Indonesia's Anti-Corruption Commission.

The USG used \$180,000 to enable 20 Indonesians - eight of them human rights activists — to participate in a one-month visit to the U.S. focused on human rights. We sent 23 leaders of Islamic boarding schools to the U.S., where they attended workshops on democratic community leadership, project planning and education. We held workshops on press ethics, and lobbied Parliament vigorously against restrictive aspects of the Broadcasting Bill.

The USG conducted a major outreach campaign to Islamic leaders, to bolster our ties with that community and explain U.S. policy. Through a University Affiliations Grant (\$125,000) and Fulbright grants (totaling \$125,000) to

three American lecturers, we also supported Gadjah Mada University's Comparative Religion Graduate Program, which was established with American assistance and is the country's only comparative religion program.

With grants to the ILO, the USG helped combat child labor and generate progress in the footwear and fishing industries. We also worked hard to support actions against trafficking in persons. A \$1.9 million grant to the International Catholic Migration Center and the Solidarity Center helped the GOI and local NGOs take crucial steps to address trafficking into prostitution, forced labor and debt bondage, including drafting a counter-trafficking law and adopting a National Action Plan, which prompted police to move against traffickers.



PHOTO: IFES

LAOS

Securing improvements in Laos' human rights situation is a cornerstone of American foreign policy on Laos, and the staff of the U.S. Embassy have been pivotal in cultivating action on the part of the Lao government towards recognizing the human rights of ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and political prisoners. The U.S. Embassy has been very active in investigating human rights abuses in the rural provinces and supporting religious freedom legislation, and regularly press for the release of political and religious minority prisoners.

The U.S. Embassy in Vientiane has been successful at eliciting interest and support from USG agencies in improving the good governance picture in Laos. In 2002, the Embassy organized a visit from the Department of Justice's Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training Program (OPDAT) to survey the governance situation to determine how, and whether, the USG could assist Laos in developing their rule of law. The Embassy has also worked closely with the International Republican Institute (IRI) in establishing a small but groundbreaking program for training local village officials on village election procedures. This program, long in the making, finally took off - and saw an outstanding turn-out - in early 2003.

The Embassy's Public Affairs Office, in coordination with the Lao Ministry of Information and Culture, organized a workshop for young journalists to improve writing skills and to encourage journalistic independence. Two more such workshops are planned in 2003.

Laos has made good use of the International Visitor (IV) Program to send senior Lao officials, including four provincial governors, to the U.S. in order to expose them to U.S. ideas pertaining to human rights and democracy. The Embassy also distributes to about 100 Lao officials a monthly collection of articles on good governance, world standards on human rights, and related subjects.

Allegations of the Lao government's mistreatment of ethnic minorities, particularly the Hmong ethnic group, represent another major human rights concern. This year the U.S. Ambassador made the first-ever visit by an American official to the Saisomboune Special Zone, an area where Hmong exile groups have reported numerous human rights violations against the native Hmong population, and visited ethnic Hmong groups in other provinces to assess their situation firsthand. These visits gave the Ambassador an opportunity to voice human rights concerns directly to local officials who might be implicated in abuses. The Ambassador also raised the issue of conditions of Laos' ethnic Hmong population on numerous occasions with senior Lao leaders and met with U.S.-based Hmong groups to exchange information.

Conditions in Laos' prisons are reportedly harsh, their prisoners often without or denied adequate food or medical care. Torture is not unknown. The U.S. Ambassador and other Embassy officers raised cases of individual political prisoners in meetings with senior Lao officials. Through its effort to follow the status of

political prisoners, Embassy confirmed the 1999 sentencing and imprisonment of five political protesters who had disappeared at the time of their arrest and whose fate was uncertain. The Ambassador also discussed Laos' prisons with senior leaders, encouraging the Government to grant international monitors access to its prison system, with a view to finding constructive ways of ameliorating the worst conditions in the country's prisons.

Violations of religious freedom are among the most egregious infringements of basic rights in Laos; this issue is a bellwether for other human rights issues, and has been the focus of U.S. Embassy efforts, which have begun to yield results. There are currently four persons known to be imprisoned for their religious belief, as opposed to 25 in mid-2000. There have been no reports of forced renunciations since early 2002, after a wave of hundreds of such reports previously. Our Embassy has received no new reports of church closings since early 2002, and many formerly closed churches have reopened in some parts of the country.

Our Embassy's many efforts contributed to this improvement. Several key American figures in the area of religious freedom visited Laos to investigate the Lao government's treatment of its religious minorities, including a Commissioner from the Commission for International Religious Freedom (CIRF). Other visits by U.S. Department of State officials helped to reinforce our message to the Lao government that the world was watching its behavior. The Embassy

worked closely with a human rights NGO, the Institute of Global Engagement (IGE), to arrange travel to the U.S. of senior members of the Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC), the Lao government organ overseeing religious practice, in order to learn about the value of free religious practice. Our Ambassador and other Embassy staff also raised the issue of religious freedom on numerous occasions with senior Lao officials, including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and senior Ministers, and made frequent field visits to assess conditions of religious minorities directly.

MALAYSIA

The Malaysian government, informed by an "Asian Values" ideology, openly acknowledges that it restricts certain political and civil rights to maintain social harmony and political stability. An advanced developing country, Malaysia has graduated from direct bilateral economic and developmental assistance, but the USG conducts a range of human rights-related programs and activities. Because the Malaysian government believes that U.S. criticisms of Malaysia's human rights practices are culturally biased and politically motivated, pressing controversial human rights questions directly with official counterparts can be counterproductive. For example, in spite of numerous formal USG requests, the Government has not signed a bilateral law enforcement training agreement because it is unable to accept a provision that signatories "seek to uphold human rights." That said, we continue to raise human rights issues with the

Government, including the conviction and imprisonment of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (whom we cite as a political prisoner) and the continued detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) of six members of the political opposition (whom we call political detainees) and the importance of free flowing information to an open and dynamic economy.

The USG maintains intensive communications with political opposition parties, human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society representatives. USG officials meet periodically with Datin Seri Wan Azizah, the President of the opposition National Justice Party and wife of imprisoned former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, to demonstrate our continued interest in Anwar's fate. Secretary Powell publicly raised U.S. concerns about Anwar during his July 2002 visit, and, during the same visit, another USG official had breakfast with Wan Azizah, Anwar's wife, to underscore this concern. USG officers also met with family members and supporters of the six opposition activists detained under the ISA, and visited a group of opposition sympathizers conducting a hunger strike in protest of the ISA detention of their six colleagues.

To underscore U.S. concern about the conditions of illegal immigrant detention centers, USG officers met with Malaysian government officials, representatives of the Human Rights Commission, International Organizations such as UNHCR, and NGOs that work on migrant worker issues. In response to international pressure and negative pub-

licity on detention center conditions in the wake of the implementation of Malaysia's new immigration law, the government pledged to ensure that camp conditions were satisfactory and to investigate allegations of abuses.

We promoted the rule of law through support for a program to assist Malaysian courts with case management reform and alternative dispute resolution. Our small grant in support of a seminar on judicial accountability helped inform one judge's recent ruling in favor of the rights of Malaysia's aboriginal people.

In support of press freedom, we sponsored visits to the U.S. for several key journalists, who returned with a keen awareness of the challenges and benefits of media free from government control. Recently, when police seized the computers of Malaysia's most independent media outlet, the on-line newspaper Malaysiakini, USG officers reached out to Malaysiakini journalists (a number of whom have been USG grantees) to demonstrate U.S. support for its continued operations.

In seeking to underscore the connection of human rights with indigenous values, the USG sponsored a major seminar on "Islam and Human Rights" that was held in a state controlled by the Islamic opposition party (PAS). The event helped strengthen contacts among the USG, human rights NGOs, and local Islamic groups that have limited communication with outsiders, and highlighted the key human rights values all share. Focusing on the role of different religions, including

Islam, in a changing American landscape and on the shared challenges of multi-religious countries, we also sponsored a conference on “Religious Pluralism in a Democratic Society” that drew large and enthusiastic crowds and garnered prominent media attention.

The USG continues to actively engage the government of Malaysia, political parties, and NGOs to raise awareness of, and to press for concrete steps to combat, trafficking in persons, including by passing legislation and by treating victims as victims rather than as outlaws. We have sent several government officials and bar council members on visits to the U.S. that specifically focus on anti-trafficking activities.

NORTH KOREA

The United States continues to be seriously concerned over North Korea’s abysmal human rights record and the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by the North Korean people. U.S. officials work 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 bring these concerns directly to the North Korean regime. The U.S. 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 U.S. is also working to end the involuntary return of North Koreans from China, as these returnees reportedly face serious abuses, including torture.

During talks in Pyongyang in October 2002, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly highlighted U.S. concerns about the deplorable human rights record of the North Korean regime. Also during 2002, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne W. Craner raised awareness of the deplorable human rights conditions inside North Korea through speeches before U.S. audiences and testified before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The U.S. regularly raises these concerns about North Korea in multilateral fora and bilaterally with other governments. U.S. officials urge other countries to condition their bilateral relations with North Korea on concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvements.

The U.S. has been a significant donor of food aid to North Korea through the World Food Program’s annual appeals. On February 25, 2003, Secretary Powell announced an initial donation of 40,000 metric tons of food assistance and stated that the U.S. is prepared to contribute up to 60,000 additional metric tons of food aid this year. The U.S. is particularly concerned that aid workers frequently are denied access to sites where this food was distributed, and thus are unable to verify that the aid consistently reaches its intended recipients. U.S. officials have presented these concerns directly to the North Korean regime. Additional food aid donations will be based on need in North Korea, competing needs elsewhere in the world, and improvements in food aid monitoring in North Korea.

The U.S. Government provided the National Endowment for Democracy with \$250,000 for sub-grants to two South Korean NGOs to support monitoring and reporting on human rights conditions in North Korea. Radio Free Asia also provides regular Korean-language broadcasting.

The involuntary return of North Koreans from China to North Korea is a matter of deep concern as these returnees reportedly face serious abuses, including torture. U.S. officials have, on multiple occasions, expressed to the Chinese Government strong objections to any such actions, drawing attention to China's international obligations and pressing the Government to refrain from returning any individual to North Korea against his or her will. Assistant Secretary Craner raised these concerns during the annual U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue held in Beijing in December. In January, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing conveyed serious U.S. concern over reports of recent arrests of over 60 North Koreans who reportedly had been attempting to board ships in Yantai, China, headed for Japan and South Korea. The U.S. consistently urges China to adhere to its international obligations as a signatory to the 1967 Protocol on Refugees and allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assess the needs and status of this vulnerable population. The U.S. has taken up the issue of North Koreans in China with the UNHCR and sought to coordinate our approach with Japan and South Korea in the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG).

The U.S. Government worked to achieve passage for the first time of a resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea during the 59th session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (CHR). The resolution 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 U.N. special representatives to visit North Korea, and ensure that humanitarian organizations have free access to the country.

VIETNAM

The Government of Vietnam (GVN) continued to repress basic political freedoms including freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, and association; arbitrarily detain its citizens, including detention for peaceful expression of political and religious views; restrict activities of registered and non-registered religious groups; and reportedly committed numerous egregious abuses in the Central Highlands. The USG consulted with GVN authorities at all levels throughout the year on human rights issues, including hosting a U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue on Human Rights. As a result of our effort, the GVN allowed numerous people to depart Vietnam, including over two dozen Montagnard families, a Chinese national who had entered Vietnam illegally, and a prominent actor who had been harassed and detained. Other intervention resulted in improved GVN treatment of some other persons of concern, such as a controversial Hoa Hao monk.

In our Human Rights Dialogue with Vietnam in November 2002 we discussed in detail issues of concern, including political and religious prisoners of concern, political and religious freedom, labor and media freedom, and judicial reform. The response was disappointing, and we informed the GVN during the dialogue that the dialogues need to be more productive to be worthwhile.

For the first time, the USG visited two Vietnamese prisons to investigate conditions. The USG raised persons of concern, including activist Pham Hong Son.

On the topic of grassroots democracy, the USG sponsored Vietnamese visitors to the U.S., and sponsored five provincial workshops, including developing pamphlets and journals on human rights. We provided gender education and women's leadership training in three provinces.

The USG sponsored a group trip to the US on the topic of the media's role in promoting civil society.

We continue to monitor the GVN's restrictive policies regarding religious freedom and have requested numerous times that the GVN release Buddhist, Catholic, and Hoa Hao leaders. Subsequently, the GVN supported medical treatment in Hanoi for Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang, and allowed our Ambassador to visit him there.

USG officers visited religious leaders following government harassment. These visits demonstrated that USG concern for their welfare may have discouraged

action against them. For example, after the U.S. Consul General's vehicle circled a station where police held two Mennonite teachers, the teachers were released. Other beneficiaries included Nguyen Dan Que and Nguyen Thanh Giang.

The USG arranged the visits of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom. We also facilitated the visit to the U.S. of GVN religious affairs officials and religious leaders.

The U.S. encouraged the GVN to ratify additional ILO conventions addressing worker rights and recognizing core worker rights. While freedom of association remained a problem, the GVN agreed to a Department of Labor (DOL) program on dispute prevention and resolution for representatives of seventy enterprises. A second DOL program on employment opportunities for people with disabilities reviewed legislation and is improving ten Employment Service Centers. DOL trained GVN agencies to address child labor issues and also introduced policies to prevent discrimination in the workplace against HIV/AIDS positive employees. The USG also sponsored Vietnamese visitors to the U.S. to examine policies for persons with disabilities.

The USG provided approximately \$500,000 in anti-trafficking funds to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs opened a shelter for victims who have been repatriated from Cambodian brothels and began expansion of a reception center for victims closer to the Cambodian border. NGOs also

worked with government and civil society organizations to highlight the dangers of trafficking and provided economic alternatives for high-risk groups.

