

Preface

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006
Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

"...progress is seldom without great challenge and those who press for change often meet with resistance and indeed harsh repression. Whenever NGOs and other human rights defenders are under siege, freedom and democracy are undermined. The world's democracies must push back. We must defend the defenders."

--*Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice*
December 14, 2006
[Commemoration](#) *of International Human Rights Day*

This report documents the many ways the United States worked in 2006 to foster respect for human rights and promote democracy worldwide.

President Bush has committed us to conduct a foreign policy rooted in freedom, and he has identified the advancement of human rights and democracy as an essential element of our national security strategy. As the President stated: "What every terrorist fears most is human freedom – societies where men and women make their own choices, answer to their own conscience, and live by their hopes instead of their resentments."

Throughout 2006, in every region of the world, we sought to promote and defend international human rights standards and democratic principles. We helped fellow democracies establish and sustain accountable institutions of government and the rule of law. We fostered free and fair election processes and encouraged the full participation of all citizens, including women and minorities, in the life of their countries. We worked to strengthen civil societies and promote media freedom. Furthermore, where human rights and democratic principles were under siege, we stood in solidarity with those who pressed for peaceful change.

Defending human dignity and supporting the growth of effective democracies across the globe is a long term effort, and it requires strong partnerships with other governments, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. There will be setbacks, and progress may at times come slowly, but we and our partners will persevere – for it is right and wise to invest in the dreams of men and women of every culture and color, every background and belief, who yearn to secure the blessings of liberty for themselves, for their children, and for the futures of their countries.

With these thoughts, I hereby transmit the Department of State's *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006* to the United States Congress.

Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State

U.S. Human Rights and Democracy Strategy

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Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006 describes the wide range of diplomatic tools we applied last year to support indigenous reform efforts across the globe.

There is no single formula for advancing personal and democratic freedoms. Our efforts focused on the three core components of a working democracy that must be present if human rights are to be effectively exercised and protected: One -- a free and fair elections process, with a level playing field to ensure genuine competition; Two -- good governance, with representative, transparent and accountable institutions operating under the rule of law, including independent legislatures and judiciaries, and; Three -- a robust civil society and independent media that can keep government honest, keep citizens engaged, and keep reforms on track. Where these three essential elements of democracy were weak, we worked to strengthen them; where they were under siege, we sought to defend them, and where they were non-existent due to government repression, we spoke out for those who live in fear yet dream of freedom.

As these reports indicate, we tailored our support for human rights and democracy to the challenges particular to each country and region. In the Western Hemisphere, for example, the principal challenge is democratic development -- helping democracies improve their capacity to deliver on the demands of their citizens for a better life. For many countries in Africa, ending violence remains central to improving human rights conditions and advancing governmental reforms. The challenges for human rights and democracy across South, Central and East Asia and the Pacific are as diverse as the countries in that vast expanse. In many cases, we helped democracies better address issues of governance to deepen the progress that they have made. In other cases, where leaders maintain control at the expense of the rights of their citizens, we spotlighted abuses and worked to expose populations to the global flow of ideas and information. In Europe, we continued to cooperate with our European partners to fulfill the vision of a continent that finally is whole, free and at peace. And in the broader Middle East and North Africa region, we responded to the growing demand for political, economic and educational reform through innovative multilateral and bilateral efforts such as the Forum for the Future and the Middle East Partnership Initiative.

Also in 2006, Secretary of State Rice announced two important initiatives in support of human rights and democracy defenders: a Human Rights Defenders Fund; and 10 guiding NGO Principles regarding the treatment by governments of nongovernmental organizations.

The Human Rights Defenders Fund will enable the State Department to quickly disburse small grants to human rights defenders facing extraordinary needs as a result of government repression. This funding, which will begin at \$1.5 million and will be

replenished each year as needed, could go to cover legal defense or medical costs, or short-term support to meet the pressing needs of activists' families.

The 10 guiding [NGO Principles](#) will guide our own treatment of NGOs, and we also will use them to assess the actions of other governments. The Principles are meant to complement lengthier, more detailed, UN and other international documents addressing NGOs and other human rights defenders. We hope that our contribution of the 10 NGO Principles will help to rally worldwide support for embattled NGOs by serving as a handy resource for governments, international organizations, civil society groups and journalists.

Advances for human rights and democracy depend first and foremost on the courage and the commitment of men and women working for reform in their own countries. Progress also will require sustained and concerted efforts by the United States and fellow democracies in every region of the world. The path forward rarely will be linear. Fragile democracies can founder. Countries whose leaders are not fully committed to democracy can backslide. Those pressing for reform inevitably encounter push back from those who do not welcome change. These are sobering realities. At the same time, we believe that our work for freedom's cause can help to create new, hopeful realities for men and women across the globe.

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Madagascar

The Republic of Madagascar is a multiparty democracy governed by President Marc Ravalomanana, who was elected to a second term in December, and his party, Tiako-I-Madagasikara. The presidential election was generally free and fair, although international and domestic observers noted the need for a number of electoral reforms. The following serious human rights problems were reported during the year: use of excessive force by security forces to disperse demonstrators, resulting in death and injuries; harsh prison conditions, which resulted in deaths; arbitrary arrest of demonstrators; lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press; official corruption; restrictions on freedom of religion; societal discrimination and violence against women; trafficking of women and girls; and child labor, including forced labor.

The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening key governmental and civil institutions. Democracy and governance sector programs worked to strengthen civil society; increase access to information; raise the skill level of journalists and media managers; promote women's rights; increase government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs; and strengthen the government's capacity to address corruption. The United States worked in close coordination with the government to combat trafficking in persons and supported grassroots human rights initiatives.

The United States partnered with international donors to encourage free, fair, transparent, and peaceful presidential elections. The ambassador met with each of the 14 presidential candidates and wrote articles promoting democratic election processes. The United States funded five billboards and 3,000 posters that encouraged presidential candidates and citizens to peacefully accept election results. Some journalists attended US-sponsored workshops on responsible election reporting. Both the ambassador and an American expert invited by the United States spoke about the importance of empowering opposition parties. The US Government translated a civic education guide into Malagasy, distributed 10,000 copies to government, education institutions, NGOs, media, and the private sector, and sponsored the author to conduct nationwide speeches and workshops. The guide inspired a US-sponsored weekly civic education program on the national radio station, which ran from July through October, as well as workshops throughout the country, daily call-in programs at local radio stations, and a public outdoor radio quiz. In November the United States also sponsored weekly national radio call-in shows on the national public radio station and eight private stations featuring high-profile government officials on voter education issues. The United States funded a media-monitoring project that showed the government fulfilled its responsibility to provide all candidates with equal access to public media. Civil society organizations around the country benefited from US-sponsored technical election observation training. The US also provided capacity building training to the country's largest consortium of national election observers. The United States funded 2,000 local election observers and 25 US teams, who were deployed to polling stations nationwide. The funding also extended the visits of international pre-election and election-day assessment teams. US officials sent several

local leaders to the United States under various international visitors programs to study transparency and good governance, engaging emerging Muslim leaders in the political process, and state and local government.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, US officials in the country organized election-related programs for a weekly discussion group for English-speaking journalists to broaden their sources of information, as well as Internet chats for journalists on various democracy-related topics. World Press Freedom Day activities included a US-produced nationwide live call-in television and radio show on the media. In May the United States sponsored two prominent local journalists to participate in a regional conference in Nairobi on the role of the media in a democracy, and some journalists participated in training with international experts on election reporting. The United States also sponsored the attendance of a journalist to a reporting tour for foreign journalists on women's empowerment and a workshop on journalism techniques in the south of the country. US officials sent a local leader to the United States under the international visitors program to study investigative journalism.

During the year the US Government sponsored programs to promote freedom of information. One of the most successful programs involved the creation of Radio Meva Ankarana, a rural radio station in the northern town of Antsaravibe, which transmitted human rights programming and health and environmental messages. The United States supported a multisector information service in eight focus regions to link civil society decision makers and government partners to sector-specific information sources. For the second year in a row, the US Government's radiocorridor coordinator ensured greater access to radio in remote regions of the country. The coordinator's role included the dissemination of independent radio programming that included educational programs relevant to local populations.

The United States funded civil society groups working to improve human rights. Their efforts included support for a women's rights initiative that conducted public outreach activities to approximately two million people. This initiative also trained civil society organizations to implement advocacy action plans, and many organizations actively participated in public consultations with the Ministry of Justice. In addition the women's initiative trained 35 magistrates, who set forth a number of resolutions for the enforcement of international and regional conventions to finalize draft legislation proposals.

The United States provided anticorruption assistance to government organizations and civil society. US funding supported the creation of a regional office of the anticorruption bureau to facilitate citizens' access to anticorruption mechanisms. The United States reinforced the capacity of anticorruption civil society organizations, including the local chapter of Transparency International and the Anticorruption Coalition. Other civil society organizations benefited from advocacy training on budget preparation and implementation at the communal level to promote public finance transparency and accountability, as well as communications training to implement anticorruption awareness campaigns. Anticorruption materials, including five different types of

manuals, were produced and distributed to approximately 90,000 students and teachers of primary and secondary schools.

To promote respect for human rights, the United States regularly participated in a multilateral/donor country human rights working group, which conducted outreach to improve public understanding and discourse on fundamental human rights. This served as a significant forum for officials and civil society to discuss human rights issues, including citizens' rights to elect a government, health and the environment, prison conditions, good governance, and the rights of persons with disabilities. In December the working group conducted a series of awareness and educational activities for International Human Rights Week. A US-funded NGO also began construction on a former community center to provide a place for residents to access more information about human rights. The United States worked to build the capacity of civil society groups, including organizations that dealt directly with the promotion of media freedom, freedom of speech, the rights of women and children, the rights of prisoners, the rights of people with disabilities, and the right to vote.

An arcane system of citizenship laws and procedures has created a significant number of stateless persons in the country. A large majority of these people are Muslims of Indo-Pakistani origin, many of whom have pending naturalization requests. During the year the ambassador regularly raised this issue with government officials and encouraged them to reform the laws and process the pending applications.

To promote religious freedom, in October US officials hosted an Iftar dinner to recognize a traditional Muslim custom and increase awareness of religious understanding. In December the ambassador also wrote an opinion editorial, which was placed in several newspapers, stressing the importance of religious tolerance.

The US Government continued to advance antitrafficking initiatives in close collaboration with the president's special antitrafficking committee. During the year the committee continued its comprehensive review of existing trafficking-related legislation, expanded its nationwide information campaign, and persisted in its efforts to rehabilitate child prostitutes in welcome centers. To support these efforts, the US Government conducted an in-depth study of sex and labor trafficking in the country. A baseline survey conducted during the year to measure the public's understanding of trafficking issues will be used to tailor awareness-raising activities. The United States also worked with police to publish a training manual on the protection of minors for distribution to police brigades around the country.