

**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
Office of the Press Secretary

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## **Fact Sheet: Advancing Democracy and Human Rights**

As the President made clear in his speech to the General Assembly today, the promotion of human rights and democracy is central to his vision of the world we are trying to build. Freedom, justice, and peace in the world must begin with freedom, justice, and peace in the lives of individual human beings.

Over the past year, the Administration has helped to advance this vision in the following ways:

### **Engaging Multilaterally to Advance Universal Values**

Taking advantage of our membership, we have used the U.N. Human Rights Council to:

- Extend international mandates to monitor and address human rights situations in several countries, including Burma, Burundi, North Korea, and Cambodia.
- Lead an effort with 55 other countries to criticize the human rights situation in Iran and express solidarity with victims and human rights defenders on the first anniversary of the contested election.
- Champion new resolutions on Guinea and Kyrgyzstan calling for accountability and heightened commitment to human rights protection and promotion in the wake of human rights crises in both countries.
- Press for stronger engagement by the Council and other U.N. human rights mechanisms in Haiti, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo and partnered with Afghanistan to build international support for a resolution on preventing attacks on Afghan school children, especially girls.
- Speak out on serious human rights abuses in Iran, North Korea, Burma, Sudan, China, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Syria, Russia, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere.
- Protest politicized efforts of some members to target Israel while ignoring problems in their own countries.

### **Committing Significant Assistance in Support of Democracy and Human Rights**

With our substantial commitments of foreign assistance, we have:

- Invested more than \$2 billion in 2009 alone to strengthen democratic institutions, civil society, the rule of law, and free and independent media, including more than \$263 million in support of democratic institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our investments in Sub-Saharan Africa will grow to over \$310 million in 2010.
- Provided targeted legal and relocation assistance to 170 human rights defenders around the world, through the Human Rights Defenders Fund, providing a lifeline of protection for raising sensitive issues and voicing dissent. Our efforts help to amplify the voices of activists and advocates working on human rights issues by shining a spotlight on their progress.
- Invested in the capacity of local organizations to promote participatory, pluralistic, and prosperous societies in the Middle East and North Africa through the Middle East Partnership Initiative.

### Taking Concerted Action in Key Areas

Exercising global leadership, the United States has:

- Created unprecedented transparency in the extractive industries by passing a new law that requires all oil, gas, and mining companies that raise capital in the United States to publish information about the payments they make to governments.
- Urged the G-20 to make corruption a core part of its agenda going forward, with a focus on critical areas including foreign bribery, transparency in the global financial system, visa denial, asset recovery, whistleblower protection, and public-private cooperation.
- Embraced a commitment to Internet Freedom and launched a State Department task force to develop concerted strategies for advancing it in particular countries.

### Pursuing Democracy and Human Rights in Our Bilateral Engagement

- **China.** In May 2010, the Obama administration held its first bilateral human rights dialogue with China. During the two-day meeting, the U.S. exchanged views with Chinese officials on key issues of concern and laid the groundwork for regular experts' dialogues on legal, labor, and religious freedom issues.
- **Colombia.** In September 2010, President Obama and incoming Colombian President Santos announced the "U.S.-Colombia High Level Partnership Dialogue," which includes a robust agenda on human rights.
- **Egypt.** The Administration criticized the government's extension of the emergency law in May. Nevertheless, as promised, the government's narrower application of that law resulted in the release of thousands of individuals detained under that law, including many political activists and journalists.
- **Guinea.** Working alongside key stakeholders in Guinea as well as international partners, the United States supported Guinea's first ever successful democratic

elections, which will soon culminate in a second round that will transition the country from military to civilian rule.

- **Honduras.** We assisted the Honduran people and the Organization of American States (OAS) to negotiate a Honduran solution to the restoration of democratic and constitutional order following the June 2009 coup, and have since supported President Lobo in the prevention, response and investigation of politically motivated violence against journalists and other citizens active in civil society.
- **Haiti.** We have supported efforts by the Government of Haiti and the UN Mission to Haiti to establish security systems in the camps of displaced persons to defeat violent crime, exploitation and trafficking of orphans/children, and prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based crimes. We are currently assisting the Government of Haiti's Provisional Electoral Commission, the OAS and CARICOM to hold free and fair presidential and legislative elections in the wake of the devastating January 12 earthquake, with the goal of ensuring a government with a legitimate mandate to govern and reconstruct.
- **Iran.** The Administration has spoken out on numerous occasions against human rights abuses in Iran, and successfully undertaken actions in the U.N. Human Rights Council and the U.N. General Assembly to formally condemn the regime's actions on human rights. The Administration also played a seminal role in forcing Iran to withdraw its candidacy for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council.
- **Iraq.** The U.S. played a key role in support of Iraq's successful national parliamentary election held on March 7, 2010. International and independent Iraqi observers expressed confidence in the integrity of the election. The U.S. continues to provide the majority of support to address the needs of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons, and resettled over 17,000 Iraqis to the United States refugees this past year.
- **Kenya.** Working alongside the international community, the United States supported Kenya's recovery from the devastating post-2007 election crisis. Through robust high-level engagement, including by President Obama, Vice President Biden, and Secretary Clinton, and programming focused on conflict mitigation and capacity-building for democratic institutions and civil society, the United States has stood by the people of Kenya as they move to implement the ambitious reform agenda brokered by Kofi Annan in the wake of the violence, culminating in a peaceful and credible August referendum in which Kenyans adopted a new constitution, the centerpiece of the agenda.
- **Kosovo.** We supported the holding of successful municipal elections in November 2009, marking a significant milestone for Kosovo in building a multi-ethnic, democratic society. The elections enjoyed increased voter participation by all ethnic groups and international observers generally praised the organization and conduct of the election.
- **Kyrgyzstan.** The United States responded immediately to the appeal of President Otunbayeva for assistance in the aftermath of the April 7 uprising, re-

targeting a significant portion of our existing \$53 million in assistance to address new priorities, and provided an additional \$58 million in assistance following the violence in June. The U.S. has also worked closely with the international community to support efforts to restore stability, and establish inter-ethnic harmony, democracy, the rule of law, economic security and prosperity.

- **Russia.** President Obama and Secretary Clinton participated in parallel, peer-to-peer civil society summits that were held during the period of our government summits in July 2009, and June 2010. The President and high-level Administration officials also gave interviews to independent Russian media, met with Russia's political opposition and civil society organizers, and have promoted the rule-of-law and freedom of speech, press, and assembly as essential elements of Russia's economic modernization.
- **Somalia.** Following an extensive policy review, the Obama Administration reoriented U.S. policy on Somalia, which resulted in the provision of capacity-building support and democracy and governance training to Somalia's Somaliland government in advance of its June elections. Hundreds of thousands of Somalilanders turned out to vote in their fourth election, which international observers deemed free and fair.

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