Advancing Freedom and Democracy Report 2012

U.S. Government Support for Democracy and Human Rights: The U.S. government seeks to advance democracy and human rights by strengthening democratic institutions, supporting civil society, enhancing the rule of law and judicial independence, promoting political pluralism and free and fair electoral processes, protecting independent media, promoting respect for Internet freedom, advocating security sector reform that encourages human rights, and promoting human rights for all members of society, including women. This report focuses on programmatic assistance.

In addition to diplomatic advocacy and foreign assistance programs, such as the Human Rights Defenders Fund, the U.S.–Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), and Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, the Department uses public diplomacy tools to advance human rights and democracy. Such tools include the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP),[1] the Voluntary Visitors (VolVis) program,[2] Lincoln Learning Centers (LLC),[3] Ambassadors’[4] and other small grants[5] (ASG) programs, American Corners,[6] the MEPI Leaders for Democracy Fellowship as well as the promotion of Voice of America,[7] and the Fulbright,[8] Humphrey,[9] and Edward R. Murrow Fellowship[10] programs, funding to prepare university-level students for leadership roles,[11] and funding speakers on democracy–related issues.[12]

Democratic Institutions and Civil Society: The U.S. government seeks to strengthen the legal framework and management practices for democratic governance and improve the capacity of government bodies to respond to their citizenry.[13] U.S. government activities also support civil service reform, including recruitment and training of professionals, and assistance to provide better government services.[14]

U.S. assistance funds programs for civil society oversight of government activities and develops capacity within civil society.[15] U.S. support strengthens the ability of such organizations to lobby governments on behalf of citizens, increase accountability, advocate political reform, build partnerships with public and private sectors, and promote more inclusive societies. Assistance supports organizations that address freedom of assembly and association, religious freedom, democratic governance, responsible legal framework, and independent media reporting.[16]

Elections and the Political Process: U.S.–funded programs strengthen the capacity of electoral institutions,[17] support improved political processes,[18] increase awareness of civic responsibilities, encourage nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide civic education and advocacy for citizens,[19] and encourage citizen participation in local and national governance.[20] U.S. officials support and preview programming that promotes a more independent media, political party organization, and elections legislation, and urge countries to pursue political liberalization, such as adopting and implementing legislation providing access to government information and permitting freedom of peaceful assembly.[21]

The United States promotes free and fair elections through training of election officials and providing support for NGO coalitions to observe local and national elections, as well as political party capacity building projects.[22] The U.S. government supports media reporting on[23] information to increase public awareness and understanding of elections processes.

The United States supports programs to prevent reoccurring violence and promote reconciliation after post-election violence.[24] These programs work with community leaders from diverse political, religious, and ethnic groups to promote tolerance, respect, and reform. The U.S. combats post–election violence in combination with human rights activists, and U.S. assistance conflict management that encourages participation by women in the political process and that helps address and prevent future gender–based violence.

Economic Freedom and Opportunity: Improving democratic governance to help governments meet socio-economic challenges is a critical component of the United States’ support for democracy and human rights. Priorities include more representative governance through greater decentralization of decision–making, political and fiscal reforms to address citizen grievances and commercial legislation reform.

In support of worker rights and well–regulated labor markets, the U.S. government works with partners such as the International Labor Organization and International Finance Corporation. The U.S. is committed to
increasing economic prosperity globally by improving quality and quantity of jobs.[25] The United States uses e–governance programming in its anticorruption efforts, targeting government and civil society capacity building, and the development and implementation of government anticorruption strategies and action plans. U.S. programs provide technical assistance, training, and systems support to governments on subjects including fiscal and budget management, community participation in policy discussions and planning, and support to associations of governors and mayors.[26] U.S. programs strengthen the independence and good governance of trade unions.[27] facilitate modern industrial relations, seek to include informal workers, the majority of whom are women, into the formal economy, and promote fair labor standards.[28]

**Press and Internet Freedom:** The United States advocates freedom of expression through media including broadcast, print, and online. The U.S. encourages networking with international journalists’ associations that enhance professionalism through workshops, program support, and technical assistance, and utilizes public diplomacy to convey the importance of the media’s role in building a democratic society.[29] Members of the press are invited to U.S.–sponsored events that focus on the democratic process. The U.S. supports journalistic ethics, media capacity building and professionalization, and local efforts to increase press freedom and access to public information. In addition, the United States promotes academic exchanges, and U.S. speakers, and the continued use of electronic media such as social networks, blogs, and electronic journals.

U.S. officials encourage governments to increase access to governmental information laws. Specific initiatives include encouraging governments to rescind criminal penalties for libel.[30] U.S. officials advocate thorough and transparent investigations of violent attacks against journalists,[31] and U.S. officials urge governments to release journalists and bloggers imprisoned for politically motivated reasons. U.S.–funded projects contribute to the professionalization of women in journalism and improve coverage of women's issues and human rights.

In closed societies, U.S.–supported broadcasting programming provides citizens with alternative sources of news and information. The U.S. supports open, public, and safe internet access and training programs that increase citizen access to information[32], including through U.S.–funded resource centers.[33]

**Rule of Law:** U.S. programs combat impunity and corruption and increase access to legal services, with technical assistance to civilian and military courts, legal aid services, and legislative reform. U.S. assistance targets national and provincial legislatures, courts in pilot jurisdictions, and provincial and municipal authorities. U.S.–funded programs support efforts to propose, review, and implement criminal law–related legislation; train judges,[34] police,[35] prosecutors, and[36] defense attorneys,[37] and offer expert institutional support in establishing more effective and accountable law enforcement structures[38] and bar associations.[39]

The United States funds measures to improve governments’ abilities to protect judges and their families from violence or intimidation. U.S. officials convey the message that extrajudicial killings and disappearances must cease and encourage governments to investigate and prosecute cases.[40] U.S. officials exchange best practices in reforming countries’ commercial laws, migration management, and antitrafficking legislation. U.S. assistance supports training and professional exchange opportunities for judges specializing in commercial law.

**Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms:** U.S. officials urge governments to bring their human rights practices into compliance with their human rights commitments and obligations, make systemic reforms, and release political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. The United States urges governments to distinguish between those seeking to express political dissent and those engaged in violence.

The U.S. government funds civil society projects to support the protection of human rights, including freedoms of speech, association and assembly, and rights of the child. Assistance seeks to enhance respect for internationally recognized labor rights, prevent violence and discrimination against women, assist indigenous communities to access effective justice, monitor human–rights observance by local police, provide emergency assistance to activists under threat, and promote religious freedom and tolerance.

U.S.–funded military training[41] includes human rights components that encourage cooperation in legal proceedings involving human rights abuses committed during conflict. Training for foreign peacekeepers via the U.S. government’s Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) includes instruction in human rights that promote appropriate behavior and conduct during missions. Foreign participants are vetted as units and individuals for past abuses in accordance with U.S. law.

The United States pursues actions to address deplorable prison conditions and prisoner abuse across the globe, urging countries to comply with universal human rights commitments.[42]

The United States promotes international labor standards and efforts to eliminate exploitive child labor. This includes projects that engage indigenous communities in participatory planning, budgeting, and monitoring to remove children from exploitive labor and place them in education programs.[43] The U.S. funds American labor rights organizations,[44] supports the participation and leadership of women and other vulnerable groups in trade unions, and promotes HIV/AIDS programs that combat workplace discrimination.[45]
The United States provides funding for local NGOs to identify and respond to acts of violence against women and children, including actively campaigning against the entrenched practice of female genital mutilation.[46] U.S. programs with NGOs assist survivors of gender-based violence in navigating the justice system and support pro bono mediation specialists to develop training materials and conduct mediation training and law workshops.[47]

U.S. officials meet community and government leaders in regions with large ethnic minorities. To support development of civil society within minority regions, U.S. officials work with NGOs to organize capacity building seminars, social outreach programs, networking opportunities with domestic and international NGOs, and tolerance in schools projects.[48]


Promotion of Disability Rights: The U.S. promotes the rights of persons with disabilities by supporting organizations run by those with disabilities, assisting in development of legal reforms, encouraging implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,[53] empowering civil society organizations that promote the rights of the disabled,[54] and assisting disabled people’s organizations to monitor compliance with legal protections of disability rights.[55]

Promotion of Women’s Rights: The U.S. commitment to women’s issues are reflected in the U.S. National Security Strategy, the State Department’s Quadrennial Diplomacy Review, and the Secretary’s March 12 Policy Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality. These initiatives seek to empower women as equal partners in preventing conflict and ensuring representation of women in peacemaking, protecting women and men from gender-based violence, and mainstreaming gender perspective conflict prevention and humanitarian protection.

End notes:

Comment on the endnotes: Because of the complexity of U.S. government programming assistance worldwide, the endnotes on country applicability are more illustrative than they are definitive.

[1] Afghanistan; Armenia; Belarus; Bhutan; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Brunei; Burma; Central African Republic; China; Democratic Republic of Congo; Comoros; Republic of Congo; Egypt; Fiji; Guinea–Bissau; Kazakhstan; Kosovo; Laos; Lesotho; Libya; Macedonia; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Moldova; Morocco; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Paraguay; Rwanda; Saudi Arabia; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Tonga; Tunisia; Uganda; Ukraine; Vietnam

[2] Afghanistan; Nepal

[3] Afghanistan; Ecuador; Malaysia

[4] Afghanistan; Swaziland

[5] Algeria; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cambodia; China; Comoros; DRC; Cote d’Ivoire; Egypt; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Fiji; The Gambia; Georgia; Israel; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kosovo; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Lebanon; Libya; Madagascar; Malaysia; Maldives; Morocco; Nicaragua; Oman; Pakistan; the Palestinian Territories; Qatar; Russia; Saudi Arabia; Seychelles; Somalia; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Togo; Tunisia; Ukraine; the United Arab Emirates; Uzbekistan; Venezuela; Yemen

[6] Albania; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cambodia; China; Comoros; DRC; Cote d’Ivoire; Egypt; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Fiji; Georgia; Guinea; Honduras; Iraq; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kosovo; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Laos; Lebanon; Macedonia; Madagascar; Malaysia; Malawi; Maldives; Mauritania; Moldova; Montenegro; Morocco; Mozambique; Nepal; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; Pakistan; Paraguay; Philippines; Russia; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Somalia; Sri Lanka; Swaziland; Syria; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Thailand; Togo; Tunisia; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Venezuela; Vietnam; Zambia; Zimbabwe

[7] Angola; Azerbaijan; Guinea–Bissau; Iran; Paraguay

[8] Armenia; Belarus; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Burma; Republic of the Congo; Libya; Macedonia; Maldives; Nepal; Paraguay
[9] Armenia; Bhutan; Burma; Nepal

[10] Armenia; Brunei Darussalam; Nepal

[11] Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies fellows; ACCESS Micro-scholarship program; the President's Entrepreneurial Summit; English Language Fellow

[12] Algeria; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Bolivia; Brunei Darussalam; Burma; Central African Republic; China; Egypt; Ethiopia; The Gambia; Georgia; Guinea; Kenya; Kosovo; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Laos; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Mauritania; Moldova; Morocco; Nepal; Nicaragua; Nigeria; Paraguay; Qatar; Russia; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Swaziland; Thailand; Togo; Tunisia; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Uganda; Ukraine; Zambia

[13] Afghanistan; Albania; Angola; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Belarus; Bolivia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Brunei Darussalam; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cambodia; Central African Republic; Chad; China; Democratic Republic of Congo; Republic of the Congo; Cote d'Ivoire; Djibouti; Ecuador; Egypt; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Fiji; Gabon; Georgia; Guatemala; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Haiti; Honduras; Iraq; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Laos; Lebanon; Liberia; Libya; Macedonia; Madagascar; Malawi; Moldova; Mozambique; Nepal; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; Oman; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Paraguay; Philippines; Russia; Rwanda; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Somalia; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Syria; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Thailand; Togo; Tonga; Tunisia; Turkmenistan; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Uzbekistan; Venezuela; Colombia; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe

[14] Afghanistan; Haiti; Iraq; Kyrgyz Republic; Maldives; Pakistan; Paraguay; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Ukraine.

[15] Armenia; Azerbaijan; Georgia; Kenya; Macedonia; Moldova; Montenegro; Nepal; Russia; Ukraine.

[16] Armenia; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Macedonia; Moldova; Tajikistan; Pakistan; Cote d'Ivoire; Georgia; Moldova; Russia; Senegal; Ukraine; Zimbabwe.

[17] Training to Independent Election Commission, National Assembly, Afghanistan; Elections Process Support Program, Armenia; Independent Electoral Commission, Democratic Republic of Congo; Increased Trust in Electoral Processes, Georgia; The Party Training Academy, Kosovo; Central Election Commission, Kyrgyz Republic; Legislative Strengthening Program, Malawi; Election Commission, Maldives; [Moldovan Electoral Administration Capacity Development Program], Moldova; Election Committee, Nepal; Election Commission, Pakistan; Permanent Election Committee, Qatar; La CENA Training, Senegal; Electoral Commission, Uganda; Political Process Program, Ukraine; Tunisia; Yemen

[18] Training to Civil Service Commission, and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Afghanistan; Monitoring of Elected Bodies, and Political Process Development, Armenia; Strengthening Civic Leadership and Civic Participation in the Democratic and Electoral Process in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan; [p] pardons of opposition candidates, Ethiopia; International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), Guatemala; Strengthening Political Competition, Georgia; implementation of the Human Rights Action Plan, Kazakhstan; Political Processes and Party Support (PPPS) Program, Strengthening Election Administration in Kosovo program, Kosovo; IVLP, Lesotho; Strengthening Democratic Political Activism, Moldova; IVLP, Morocco; IVLP, The American Library, Nepal; small grants, Nicaragua; Pilot Engagement with States (PES) program, Jos Task Force, Nigeria; IVLP, Pakistan; IVLP, Papua New Guinea; IVLP, Rwanda; Election Monitoring and Voter Education program, Promoting Civic and Political Engagement in Russia, and Strengthening Democratic Institutions, Russia; IVLP, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Yemen, Oman; Bahrain, Kuwait; American Connections, Singapore; [enforcement of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Sudan; American Corners, Tajikistan; small grants, Togo; Promoting Credible Elections and Accountable Government in Togo; Political Process, Ukraine

[19] Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bahrain; Belarus; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; China; Republic of the Congo; Cote d'Ivoire; Egypt; Fiji; Honduras; Iraq; Kyrgyz Republic; Liberia; Maldives; Moldova; Morocco; Mozambique; Nepal; Nicaragua; Niger; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Russia; Solomon Islands; Swaziland; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Ukraine; Libya; Tunisia; Yemen

[20] Armenia; Azerbaijan; “Get Out the Vote” (GÖTv) campaign, Georgia; GÖTv, Kuwait; GÖTv campaign, Moldova; Russia; Ukraine

[21] Azerbaijan; Armenia; Belarus; Bhutan; Cuba; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Macedonia; Moldova Russia; Tunisia; Ukraine; and Zimbabwe

[22] Azerbaijan; Armenia; Bhutan; Burkina Faso; Georgia; Guinea; Kazakhstan; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Moldova; Pakistan; Russia; Sierra Leone; Togo; Tunisia; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Zimbabwe

[23] Azerbaijan; Armenia; Belarus; Bhutan; Burkina Faso; Burma; Central African Republic; Cuba; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Macedonia; Mauritania; Nigeria; Pakistan; Russia; Zimbabwe; United Arab
Emirates, Ukraine; Zimbabwe.

[24] Bhutan; Central African Republic; Guinea Bissau; Kenya; Kyrgyz Republic; Senegal; Somalia; Zimbabwe

[25] Albania; Armenia; Democratic Republic of Congo; Egypt; Ethiopia; Kazakhstan; Liberia; Mauritania; Nepal; Niger; Russia; Sierra Leone; Somalia; Tunisia; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Zimbabwe

[26] Albania; Azerbaijan; Armenia; Central African Republic; Democratic Republic of Congo; Egypt; Ethiopia; Kazakhstan; Liberia; Mauritania; Niger; Russia; Somalia; Ukraine; Zimbabwe

[27] Georgia; Guinea; Kenya; Tunisia

[28] Cuba; Egypt; The Gambia; Kenya; Kyrgyz Republic; Niger; Nigeria; Russia; Tunisia; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; China

[29] Azerbaijan; Armenia; Belarus; Bhutan; Burkina Faso; Central African Republic; Democratic Republic of Congo; Ethiopia; The Gambia; Georgia; Guinea; Guinea Bissau; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Macedonia; Moldova; Nepal; Russia; Somalia; Tajikistan; Tunisia; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Zimbabwe; Ecuador; Honduras; Argentina; Mexico

[30] Armenia; Democratic Republic of Congo; Kyrgyz Republic

[31] Armenia; Azerbaijan; Kyrgyz Republic; Nepal; Russia; Somalia

[32] Armenia; Azerbaijan; Brunei Darussalam; China; Cuba; Ecuador; Egypt; Eritrea; Georgia; Guinea Bissau; Iran; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Madagascar; Malaysia; Nigeria; Rwanda; Singapore; Timor Leste; Tunisia; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; Vietnam

[33] Afghanistan; Albania; Algeria; Angola; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Belarus; Bolivia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cambodia; Cameroon; China; Congo; Cuba; DRC; Cote d'Ivoire; Ecuador; Egypt; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Guatemala; Georgia; Guinea; Haiti; Honduras; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kosovo; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Liberia; Laos; Macedonia; Madagascar; Malawi; Moldova; Morocco; Mozambique; Nepal; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; Oman; Pakistan; Paraguay; Philippines; Russia; Rwanda; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Swaziland; Syria; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Thailand; Togo; Tunisia; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Uzbekistan; Venezuela; Vietnam; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe

[34] Albania; Azerbaijan; Armenia; Bosnia; Cameroon; Democratic Republic of Congo; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Liberia; Macedonia; Moldova; Russia; Serbia; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates

[35] Albania; Armenia; Bosnia; Burkina Faso; Ethiopia; The Gambia; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Macedonia; Nepal; Nigeria; Russia; Serbia; United Arab Emirates

[36] Albania; Azerbaijan; Armenia; Bosnia; Georgia; Kenya; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Liberia; Macedonia; Moldova; Russia; Serbia; Ukraine

[37] Albania, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Macedonia, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine

[38] Albania; Azerbaijan; Armenia; Bosnia; Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Nepal; Russia; United Arab Emirates

[39] Georgia; Kosovo; Moldova; Russia

[40] Armenia; Central African Republic; Chad; Nepal; Russia; Tunisia; Zimbabwe


[42] Armenia; Belarus; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Cuba; Democratic Republic of Congo; Kyrgyz Republic; Nepal; Russia

[43] Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Cote d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of Congo; Egypt; The Gambia; Guinea; Niger; Sierra Leone

[44] Cuba; The Gambia; Georgia; Kenya; Kyrgyz Republic; Niger; Nigeria; Russia; Tunisia; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates.

[45] Egypt; Eritrea; Kenya; Ukraine; Zimbabwe

[46] Armenia; Egypt; Eritrea; Guinea

[47] Armenia; Burkina Faso; Cote d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of Congo; Ethiopia; Guinea; Kazakhstan; Kenya;
Liberia; Pakistan; Sudan; Ukraine; Mexico

[48] Azerbaijan; Armenia; Cote d'Ivoire; Georgia; United Arab Emirates

[49] Albania; Azerbaijan; Armenia; Belarus; Georgia; Kenya; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Nepal; Niger; Nigeria; Pakistan; Russia; Sierra Leone; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Zimbabwe

[50] Albania; Azerbaijan; Armenia; Chad; Democratic Republic of Congo; Ethiopia; Georgia; Kenya; Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Nepal; Niger; Nigeria; Pakistan; Russia; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; Zimbabwe

[51] Armenia; Azerbaijan; Cote d'Ivoire; Egypt; Ethiopia; The Gambia; Georgia; Kyrgyz Republic; Nepal; Nigeria; Pakistan; Tunisia; Bahrain; Zimbabwe

[52] Azerbaijan; Armenia; Bhutan; Central African Republic; Egypt; Ethiopia; The Gambia; Georgia; Kyrgyz Republic; Macedonia; Nepal; Nigeria; Pakistan; Sudan; Tunisia; United Arab Emirates; Zimbabwe.

[53] China

[54] Armenia; Macedonia; Turkmenistan

[55] Kenya