



United States Mission to the OSCE

Human Rights Report Released

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 25, 2013

The United States notes that on April 19, 2013, Secretary Kerry submitted the *2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (commonly known as the Human Rights Report) to the United States Congress as required by law. This report, now in its 36th year, is available at www.State.gov and www.HumanRights.gov. Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, the report is required by U.S. law and informs U.S. Government policy. It also serves as a reference for other governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, scholars, interested citizens, and journalists. The following three issues are among the most noteworthy human rights developments the report highlights for 2012:

First, the shrinking space for civil society activism. In 2012, certain governments continued to repress or attack the means by which citizens could organize, assemble, or seek better performance from their leaders. Across the globe, crackdowns on civil society included new laws impeding or preventing freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and religion; heightened restrictions on the ability of organizations to receive funding; and the killing, harassment, and arrest of political, human rights, and labor activists.

Second, threats to freedom of expression in a changing media landscape. Freedom of expression – a universal human right and a crucial element of democracy – faced serious threats. There were also positive strides, however, with social media amplifying voices and allowing ordinary citizens to expose human rights violations or to organize collective action, even when traditional media were fully controlled by authoritarian regimes.

Third, continued marginalization of vulnerable groups. In too many places, governments continued to persecute, or allow the persecution of, members of religious and ethnic minorities; women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people; persons with disabilities; migrants; and other vulnerable populations. Additionally, lawful migrant workers across the globe faced employment and societal discrimination, lack of sufficient legal protections, harassment in the workplace, and, in some cases, labor exploitation, including forced labor.

As Secretary Kerry said in release of the report last Friday, “anywhere human rights are under threat, the United States will proudly stand up, unabashedly, and continue to promote greater freedom, greater openness, and greater opportunity for all people. And that means speaking up when those rights are imperiled. It means providing support and training to those who are risking their lives every day so that their children can enjoy more freedom.”

Mr. Chairman, the United States will also continue to listen and to reply forthrightly to the views of others regarding our performance in these areas. We view such dialogue to be positive and in keeping with our OSCE commitments, and we urge all participating States to exhibit this same spirit.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.