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2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

Fact Sheet
Office of the Spokesperson
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Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

May 24: Secretary Clinton and Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Michael Posner released the 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. [View Reports](#)» [Fact Sheet](#)» [Remarks](#)»

On May 24, 2012, the Secretary submitted the *2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (Human Rights Reports) to the United States Congress. The Human Rights Reports provide the facts underlying U.S. efforts to promote respect for human rights worldwide. They inform U.S. government policymaking and serve as a reference for other governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, scholars, interested citizens, and journalists. The Human Rights Reports assess each country's situation against universal human rights standards, during each calendar year, and each report stands on its own. Countries are not compared to each other or placed in any order other than alphabetically by region. This year, the Department modernized both the format of the reports and the online user interface.

Human Rights Around the World in 2011: Key Trends

The reports record the state of human rights throughout the world in 2011. It was a year of significant change in the Middle East and North Africa as citizens stood up and demanded universal rights, dignity, greater economic opportunity, and increased political participation. Those demonstrations sent aftershocks rumbling around the world.

In Tunisia, citizens participated in transparent and credible elections for a Constituent Assembly. That Assembly elected a former political prisoner as the country's interim prime minister. In Burma, the government took important steps toward political reform and released more than 200 of its political prisoners. And, in Colombia, the government continued to strive to improve justice in human rights cases.

Unfortunately, 2011 witnessed negative developments as well. A number of countries became less free as a result of flawed elections; restrictions on the universal rights to freedom of expression, assembly, or association, including on the Internet; moves to censor or intimidate the media; or attempts to control or curtail the activities of nongovernmental groups. Other disturbing trends include an increase in anti-Semitism, and continued persecution of other religious minorities, including Ahmadis, Baha'is, Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and others. In many countries there was an increase in abuse, discrimination, and violence against members of racial and ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

The focus of the Human Rights Reports is on the human rights performance of other governments. We note that the United States does examine its own human rights record against its international commitments and obligations in many other fora. For example, in December, the United States submitted a lengthy report to the U.N. Human Rights Council on U.S. implementation of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. The United States also engages in the U.N. Universal Periodic Review process, through which the human rights records of the U.N.'s 193 Member States are reviewed and assessed once every four years. These reports are available on [HumanRights.gov](#).

New Format and Interface for the 2011 Human Rights Reports

In keeping with the Secretary's 21st Century Statecraft Initiative and the President's Open Government Initiative, the 2011 Human Rights Reports were redesigned this year to be more accessible to a broad spectrum of readers. The State Department developed a streamlined format for each country report, which now includes a country-specific executive summary and illustrative examples of the significant human rights problems reported in that country in 2011. The decision to streamline this year's reports facilitates understanding of the facts and should not be interpreted in any way as a lessening of concern for the overall human rights situation in any particular country.

The format of the 2011 Human Rights Reports also makes them easier to read online. The redesigned reports contain clearly marked headings and a table of contents, and can be shared via social media. Users can also now research topics across countries using the *Build a Report* tool.

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To view the new 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices visit www.HumanRights.gov/reports.

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