

# FACTBOX - U.S. paints grim picture of global human rights | World | Reuters

REUTERS - The United States on Thursday released its annual review of the human rights situation around the world, singling out China and Iran among other countries for rights violations.

Following are some of the highlights of the report, which altogether covers 194 countries.

## CHINA

Beijing increased its efforts to monitor and restrict Internet use, blocking access to selected domestic and foreign websites and deleting millions of items of information, the report said.

It also said the government exerted tight control over people perceived as threat to Communist Party rule, and increased repression of Uighurs following July riots in Xinjiang, handing out long prison terms and in some cases death sentences without due process.

In Tibet, the report said, Chinese authorities committed extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary arrests.

## IRAN

The report said Iran's poor human rights record degenerated during the year, particularly after a government crackdown following the disputed June presidential elections.

It said Iran continued to restrict freedom of expression and assembly, while lack of due process was also a widespread problem. It said opposition groups said as many as 70 people had been killed in the violent crackdown on protests, while at least 4,000 people were detained.

Tehran continued to restrict freedom of religion, and had blocked Internet networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, it said.

## NORTH KOREA

The report said North Korea maintained "rigid controls" over its citizens, depriving them of many basic rights, and noted that defectors and non-governmental organizations had reported extrajudicial killings, disappearances and arbitrary detentions.

The Pyongyang government controls virtually all information in the country, engages in systematic mass indoctrination of the population and denies genuine religious liberty, it said.

## CUBA

Cuba maintained severe limitations on free speech and freedom of assembly over the course of the year, the report said.

It said the government did not grant permission for any anti-government demonstrations or public meetings by human rights groups, and detained numerous opposition leaders under a range of charges.

The Cuban government also continued to restrict access to information, and human rights activists reported frequent government monitoring and disruption of cellphone and landline services.

## MYANMAR

The U.S. report accused Myanmar's military government of continued egregious human rights violations, including increased military attacks in restive minority regions and detention of civic activists without charge.

"The regime continued to rule by decree and was not bound by any constitutional provisions guaranteeing any

fundamental freedoms," the report said.

## ISRAEL AND PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

The report noted that Israel launched a military assault on Gaza in December 2008 following an increase in Palestinian rocket attacks targeting civilians in Israel.

It said human rights organizations estimated close to 1,400 Palestinians were killed and more than 5,000 were wounded in the air strikes and ground operations, although it also said Israel provided slightly lower figures. Thirteen Israelis were killed including three civilians, it said.

The report said Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank remained "significant barriers" to Palestinian movement, and listed reports of corruption, abuse of prisoners and failure to provide fair trials in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

## RUSSIA

Government actions have weakened freedom of expression and media independence in Russia, the report said, adding that a number of human rights activists and journalists had been killed by unknown persons.

"The government increasingly attempted to restrict media freedom to cover sensitive issues such as the conduct of federal forces in Chechnya, human rights abuses, and criticism of some government leaders," it said.

The report also noted that the situation had worsened in the North Caucasus region, with both government and insurgent forces accused of killings, torture and politically motivated abductions.

## SRI LANKA

The United States said that both government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) used excessive force and committed abuses against civilians before their 33-year-old conflict ended in May.

It said the LTTE denied freedom of movement to several hundred thousand ethnic Tamil civilians in regions under its control, and dramatically increased the forced recruitment of child soldiers.

It said the government's confinement of some 300,000 people displaced by the conflict called into question its commitment to human rights, although it said it had noted some improvements in the run-up to the January 2010 presidential elections.

## OTHERS

The report noted human rights problems in a number of other countries, including U.S. allies Egypt and Saudi Arabia, conflict-riven Sudan and both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It also highlighted an increase in "traditional and new forms of anti-Semitism", as well as rising discrimination against Muslims in Europe highlighted by Switzerland's Nov. 29 passage of a referendum banning the construction of minarets.

(Reporting by Andrew Quinn in Washington; editing by Mohammad Zargham)

(To access the State Department report, click [here](#))