

## **2016 Human Rights Reports – Secretary’s Preface**

Promoting human rights and democratic governance is a core element of U.S. foreign policy. These values form an essential foundation of stable, secure, and functioning societies. Standing up for human rights and democracy is not just a moral imperative but is in the best interests of the United States in making the world more stable and secure. The 2016 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (The Human Rights Reports) demonstrate the United States’ unwavering commitment to advancing liberty, human dignity, and global prosperity.

This year marks the 41st year the Department of State has produced annual Human Rights Reports. The United States Congress mandated these reports to provide policymakers with a holistic and accurate accounting of human rights conditions in nearly 200 countries and territories worldwide, including all member states of the United Nations and any country receiving U.S. foreign assistance. The reports cover internationally recognized individual civil, political, and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments.

The Human Rights Reports reflect the concerted efforts of our embassies and consulates to gather the most accurate information possible. They are prepared by human rights officers at U.S. missions around the world who review information available from a wide variety of civil society, government, and other sources. These reports represent thousands of work-hours as each country team collects and analyzes information. The Department of State strives to make the reports objective and uniform in scope and quality.

The Human Rights Reports are used by the U.S. Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches as a resource for shaping policy and guiding decisions, informing diplomatic engagements, and determining the allocation of foreign aid and security sector assistance. The Human Rights Reports are also used throughout the world to inform the work of human rights advocates, lawmakers, academics, businesses, multilateral institutions, and NGOs.

The Department of State hopes these reports will help other governments, civil society leaders, activists, and individuals reflect on the situation of human rights in their respective countries and work to promote accountability for violations and abuses.

Our values are our interests when it comes to human rights. The production of these reports underscores our commitment to freedom, democracy, and the human rights guaranteed to all individuals around the world.

I hereby transmit the Department of State’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016* to the United States Congress.

*Rex W. Tillerson*  
*Secretary of State*