October 2001

To: Pastors of Churches and Clerks of Sessions Where There Is No Installed Pastor, and Stated Clerks and Executives of Presbyteries and Synods

Dear Friends:

The 213th General Assembly (2001) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) asked me to publish the Human Rights Update 2000-2001 with study action guide on the PC(USA) Web site and to distribute the Web site address to the entire church. However, upon request a printed copy of the Human Rights Update 2000-2001 will be made available to each middle governing body or session.

This paper is presented for the guidance and edification of the whole Christian church and the society to which its ministers. It is recommended for consideration and study by our governing bodies (sessions, presbyteries, and synods). The study action guide is designed for personal and class use, with the desire that we may all become more aware of the lives, concerns, and hopes of others elsewhere in the world who are under the care of the living God.

This year's update includes five categories of human rights' concerns to the attention of the General Assembly, for the most part, by our partner churches around the world. They are civil rights, political rights, economic rights, social and cultural rights, and religious rights.

The 213th General Assembly (2001) encourages all middle governing bodies, sessions, and individual members to pray for all victims of human rights' abuse and for those who persecute them, while seeking ways to act on behalf of these victims.

Finally, the commissioners of the 213th General Assembly (2001) have requested that I call special attention to "Human Rights Day," December 10, 2001, as a possible day for highlighting the study and use of the Human Rights Update 2000-2001.

Yours in Christ's Service,

Clifton Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
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The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 213th General Assembly (2001) bring to the attention of the church the significant developments that have occurred concerning the conditions of human rights in the world areas named in the “Human Rights Update 2000–2001” by

1. directing the Stated Clerk to publish the “Human Rights Update 2000–2001” with study action guide on the PC(USA) Web site, providing a copy upon request to each middle governing body or session, distributing the Web site address to the entire church through notification on the Web site and in the Minutes of the 213th General Assembly (2001), Part I, and calling special attention to “Human Rights Day” to be held December 10, 2001;

2. encouraging middle governing bodies, sessions, and individual members to pray for all victims of human rights abuse and for those who persecute them, also seeking ways to act on behalf of these victims;

3. encouraging congregations to observe the General Assembly’s Day of Prayer for Those Persecuted and Martyred for Their Faith on the Sunday preceding Epiphany; and


I. Introduction

The “Human Rights Update” is an annual report developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This yearly report affirms the Presbyterian church’s long-standing commitment to human rights worldwide.

The “Human Rights Update” lifts up five categories of concerns brought to the attention of the General Assembly Council (GAC), for the most part, by the partner churches around the world. They are civil, political, economic, social and cultural, and religious. In this year’s update, greater emphasis has been given to religious freedom concerns, which varies by region. This issue has also been highlighted as an affirmation of the work of the GAC’s Human Rights and Religious Freedom Abroad Initiative Team, whose mandate includes advising the GAC and responding to General Assembly initiatives on religious freedom abroad in a way consistent with General Assembly policy.

The “Human Rights Update 2000–2001,” however, should not be construed by the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as the definitive statement of all the human rights violations received by the GAC during the course of the year. The 213th General Assembly (2001) encourages the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to continue to pray and to work to end all forms of human rights violations worldwide. The “Human Rights Update 2000-2001” includes an action study guide developed to assist the middle governing bodies, sessions, and individual members to engage and focus on human rights issues.

II. Global Update

United Nations

1. A Vision for the 21st Century: Tolerance and Diversity

As we begin the 21st century and the third millennium, Mary Robinson, United Nations (UN) high commissioner for human rights, and Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, have provided us words upon which to reflect:

We all constitute one human family. This truth has now become self-evident because of the first mapping of the human genome, an extraordinary achievement which not only reaffirms our common humanity but promises transformations in scientific thought and practice, as well as in the visions which our species can entertain for itself. It encourages us toward the full exercise of the human spirit, the reawakening of all its inventive, creative, and moral capacities, enhanced by the equal participation of men and women, and it could make the twenty-first century an era of genuine fulfillment and peace.

We must strive to remind ourselves of this great possibility . . . we must refocus our understanding, discern in such diversity the potential for mutual enrichment, and realize that it is the interchange between great traditions of human spirituality that offer the best prospect for the persistence of the human spirit itself.¹

2. Secretary General Kofi Annan and the Millennium

—Themes: Freedom From Want and Freedom From Fear

The year 2000 was an unusual year at the United Nations, particularly as it sought to capture the significance of the beginning of the 21st century and the third millennium. Its efforts were geared to identify the challenges for the world in the new era and to set the agenda for addressing those challenges.

The 55th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2000 was designated the Millennium Assembly and its agenda included the whole array of issues before the world. The secretary general (SG) issued two reports related to the Millennium Assembly. The first, given the title: We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in
the 21st Century, was designed as the inspirational piece for the member states, setting forth the challenges before the world. Two of the four major themes were set in human rights terms. They drew on language familiar to United States citizens: Freedom From Want and Freedom From Fear. Freedom from Want was a way of introducing development agenda and the challenge of world poverty in the 21st century in the face of globalization patterns that are providing tremendous opportunities for change but are not being shared by all peoples.

The secretary general called, among other things, for efforts to reduce by 2015 the proportion of the world’s people currently living on less than a dollar a day (22 percent) by half, and to reduce by half the number of people who have no access to safe drinking water (20 percent), and to ensure that all children complete a full course of primary education. Freedom From Fear introduced the security agenda, which, while not suggesting that major war is out of the question, does suggest that the challenge has shifted from traditional violation of borders to deliberate violations of people. Forms of internal violence that have emerged change the focus of primary security concerns to the right of individuals, communities and groups to be free from violence and abuse by terrorists, extremists, or systemic repression.

The secretary general’s second report to the General Assembly was his annual report on the work of the organization. In it he noted some of the activities of the Commission on Human Rights (see below), and the progress made on the International Criminal Court emerging from the ongoing Preparatory Commission meetings that are working on the procedures that will govern that court when it comes into being. Regarding the International Criminal Court, the commission has adopted texts of two instruments. The first is the Rules of Procedure and Evidence that will regulate the Court. The Rome Treaty established the International Criminal Court, its jurisdiction, trial procedures, rules of evidence, and protection for victims and witnesses. The second is the clarification of the Elements of Crimes that cover the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, which are identified in the Rome Treaty. The Rome Treaty established the International Criminal Court. The question of crimes of aggression is still to be resolved. The United States (U.S.), while working with the Preparatory Commission, has withheld full support in its efforts to limit any jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over citizens of the U.S.

The secretary general also reported on the special initiative he took relating the Millennium Summit to the ratification of the basic international treaties that are essential for the evolving rule of law. In anticipation of the Summit Meeting, the secretary general compiled the texts of twenty-five major multilateral treaties that represent the objectives of the Charter of the UN, including human rights treaties, sending them with a letter requesting that governments consider using the summit as the occasion for affirming those treaties. By the time of the summit, sixty-nine countries had responded in positive ways to that request.

3. The Millennium Assembly and Declaration

The 55th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2000 was designated as the Millennium Assembly. To start it off, 150 heads of state and government gathered in New York for three days, September 6–8, 2000, to reaffirm support for the UN in its role in providing the indispensable foundation for a more peaceful and just world. One of the outcomes of this event was the “United Nations Millennium Declaration,” an expression of the commitments of the leaders gathered in New York. In the context of this report, they called for support of the right to self-determination of peoples, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. They underlined certain fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. These include:

- freedom—the right of men and women to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and the fear of violence, oppression or injustice;
- equality—the right of every individual and nation to benefit from development, and the assurance of equal rights and opportunities for women as well as men;
- solidarity—the management of global challenges that distribute the costs and burdens fairly, based on principles of equity and social justice;
- tolerance—the assertion that human beings must respect one another, in all of their diversity of belief, culture, and language;
- respect for nature—prudence in the management of all species and natural resources to enable sustainable development and assure benefits for all; and
- shared responsibility—not only are the rights and privileges to be shared, but the responsibilities are to be borne together.

In the specific commitments related to human rights, democracy and good governance, they resolved to respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to protect and promote all of the rights encompassed (civil, political, economic, social and cultural); to implement principles and practices of democracy, including the protection of minorities; to combat violence and discrimination against women; to promote the rights and protections of migrants and their families; and to eliminate racism and xenophobia.

The words and commitments to the realization of universal human rights may certainly be inspiring. The challenge remains whether the political will exists to
override the conflicting political and economic interests of member states that may also be at stake.

4. Addressing Global Racism

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) designated the year 2001 as the “International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance” and has sponsored a World Conference on Racism in order to focus on this theme. Coming at the beginning of the new century and millennium, these actions are reminders of problems and conflicts that the world carries with it into the new era that need to be addressed as sources of injustice, conflict, and insecurity for coming generations.

These international concerns and all of their manifestations impact all of our societies in one way or other. They are also of concern to our faith communities that have been and are often torn and divided by negative racial attitudes and practices. Religions have provided sanction not only for racist attitudes, but have often justified the historic, social, and cultural forces that fostered such patterns.

The United Nations (UN) has called not only on governments to address these issues, but also organizations of civil society, including religious institutions, to join in the processes of study, examination, education, and advocacy to bring about an end to such practices and address the consequences of the practices on victims and the societies in their totality. The challenge is therefore ours, not only by virtues of our being members of civil society, but because the church in its own life, in its ecumenical relations, and in its mission partnerships, needs to support these international efforts and to engage in education, action, advocacy, acts of atonement in its own life, and to facilitate such processes within the United States.

The UN has been addressing the question of global racism and discrimination from its origins. It began with a simple but clarion call in the statement of purposes in the UN Charter (1945), which includes “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” (Article 1 (3)).

That commitment found expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the foundational statement adopted in 1948, and has been expressed in virtually every human rights document and instrument produced by the UN.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (UDHR, Article 2)

At the beginning of the new millennium, the UN has been seeking new ways to address historic problems and obstacles that stand in the way of achieving its mandates: peace and security; the reaffirmation and promotion of human rights for all; the development of international law, norms and standards; and economic justice and well-being for all. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance hinder the achievement of all of those objectives.

Since 1948, the UN has helped in the development of international law related to genocide, apartheid, racism, and racial discrimination. This development has included the definitions and specifics that have shaped international norms, if not practices. Included in this body of human rights law are the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) 1948; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICEAFRD) 1965; and the International Convention of the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (ICSPCA) 1973. Some of the definitions that have been formulated help us understand the dimensions of the challenge, and are worthy of study both in historical and contemporary contexts.

- Racial Discrimination

...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (ICEAFRD—Article 1)

- Racism

[Racism] includes racist ideologies, prejudiced attitudes, discriminatory behavior, structural arrangements and institutionalized practices resulting in racial inequality as well as the fallacious notion that discrimination relations between groups are morally and scientifically justifiable; it is reflected in discriminatory provision in legislation or regulations and discriminatory practices as well as in anti-social beliefs and acts; it hinders the development of its victims, perverts those who practice it, divides nations internally, impedes international co-operation and gives rise to political tensions between peoples; it is contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and, consequently, seriously disturbs international peace and security. (Declaration on Racism, 1978)

- Genocide

[Genocide] means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (Genocide Convention—Article II)

- Apartheid

[Apartheid] is a crime against humanity and that inhuman acts resulting from the policies and practices of apartheid and similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination...are crimes violating the principles of international law...and [constitute] a serious threat to international peace and security. (International Convention of the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid—Article I) (Note that apartheid is descriptive of a crime, not just a term applied to a system that had
been operative in South Africa.)

... the term “the crime of apartheid”, which shall include similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination as practiced in southern Africa, shall apply to the following inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them:

(a) Denial to a member or members of a racial group or groups of the right to life and liberty of person:

(i) By murder of members of a racial group or groups;

(ii) By the infliction upon the members of a racial group or groups of serious bodily or mental harm, by the infringement of their freedom or dignity, or by subjecting them to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

(iii) By arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment of the members of a racial group or groups;

(b) Deliberate imposition on a racial group or groups of living conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part;

(c) Any legislative measures and other measures calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups, in particular by denying to members of a racial group or groups basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;

(d) Any measures, including legislative measures, designed to divide the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the members of a racial group or groups, the prohibition of mixed marriages among members various racial groups, the expropriation of landed property belonging to a racial group or groups or to members thereof;

(e) Exploitation of the labour of the members of a racial group or groups, in particular by submitting them to forced labour;

(f) Persecution of organizations and persons, by depriving them of fundamental rights and freedoms, because they oppose apartheid (Apartheid Convention, Article 2)\(^6\)

These provide harsh measures for evaluating our collective histories of racism and intolerance.

In addition to the effort to establish the appropriate norms and the basis for international law, United Nations programmatic activity has included two earlier world conferences on racism: one in 1978 focused on racial discrimination, the second in 1983 addressed the issue of apartheid, and the sponsorship of three decades on overcoming racism (1973–82; 1983–92; 1993–2002).

The mandate of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) includes all concerns for human rights, including racism. In its capacity as the organizer of the Conference on Racism, the OHCHR put forward a clear message: racism, and similar manifestations of human behavior, embody massive, historic, and systemic violations of human rights. The whole effort calls us to examine a number of major themes: the sources, causes, forms, and contemporary manifestations of the related patterns of intolerance; identification of and understanding of the victimized; measures required for prevention and protection aimed at the eradication of racism, etc.; questions of remedies and redress for victims; and strategies for international cooperation and action.

The challenges to us all are multiple, and they include:

- reviewing progress in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance since the UDHR;
- examining the ways and means of applying and implementing existing standards and instruments;
- raising the levels of awareness and understanding regarding the different and multiple forms and expressions of intolerance;
- reviewing the historical, political, economic, social, cultural and other factors contributing to racism, etc;
- strategizing at all levels, including national and regional, on ways to eliminate all forms of racism and intolerance, in efforts to eliminate all of the manifestations considered; and
- planning for the financial requirements to implement the UN’s program.

While there might be much agreement on the evils and negative consequences of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance as matters of principle, awareness of and acknowledgment of complicity does not come lightly. Agreeing on the issues will not be easy, nor will there necessarily be agreement regarding causality and consequences. Certainly accepting responsibility for racism and intolerance will be hard if it challenges perceptions of one’s own innocence or even victimhood.

The causes of racism and other patterns of discrimination are multiple and complex. Efforts by governments and activists to seek solutions can sometimes result in oversimplification or denial of the complex dynamics involved. The most obvious conflict will revolve around considerations of redress, compensation or reparations for past as well as current injustices. This is complicated enough if it involves the psycho-social-moral questions of guilt and atonement, acknowledgment and repentance regarding the past. Who can “apologize” for the sins of the past? Who can accept the apology on behalf of past victims? Who can grant “absolution” for the past misdeeds? If monetary compensation is added to the mix, the questions are
obvious—who pays; who gets how much and on what basis; how is it assured that the debt is paid, without being subject to the claims of some future generation, etc. These questions are no longer merely academic discourses into moral theory, but reflections of a whole new field of litigation that has developed to redress the grievances that individuals and peoples allege they have suffered.

The UN calls us to recognize

- that racism, intolerance, discrimination, prejudice are universal challenges and are interrelated—manifesting themselves in every society and culture—no group is immune, nor is any group free from patterns of discrimination and prejudice;

- that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, mistreatment of minorities, migrants, indigenous persons, etc., are all violations of fundamental human rights that are the inherent right of all people, not just certain categories of people;

- that racism takes many forms—normally finding expression in minority-majority divisions reflecting power differentials;

- that racial intolerance and religious intolerance often intersect to create “ aggravated discrimination” or “double discrimination,” and that if these intersect with matters of gender, then a triple burden is experienced by women.

The United States (U.S.) has not paid a great deal of attention in the past to the larger global problems related to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, etc., and therefore much of this global consideration is unknown and/or unheeded by most Americans. It is easy to speculate on the reasons. As examples, it took the U.S. forty years to ratify the Genocide Convention. And it took the U.S. almost thirty years before it ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (1994). Having finally done this latter one, it requires regular reporting by States Parties to it. The U.S. will make its first report to the CERD Committee in 2001, five years after it was first due. Indications are that advocacy groups are prepared to criticize the U.S. for noncompliance, arguing that the U.S. still has not adequately addressed its own internal racial, ethnic, and minority divisions.

5. Reports of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Commission for Human Rights changed the title of the special rapporteur on religious intolerance, a position created as a response to growing concerns over the widespread evidence of intolerance against religious communities, to the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. The original title of the office focused only on the negative, and became a hindrance to fulfillment of the mandate because of its connotations. Countries were concerned that any communication with the special rapporteur (SR) implied they were guilty of religious intolerance. The new title suggests a fuller agenda, not only to investigate allegations and evidences of religious intolerance, but also the positive promotion of freedom of religion or belief.

a. Interim Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The interim report submitted to the 55th UN General Assembly (2000), by Professor Abdelfattah Amor, the incumbent special rapporteur, considers the situation in twenty-five states, with another thirty-six states under investigation. These considerations are based upon complaints or issues specifically referred to the High Commission for Human Rights (HCHR).

A review of the matters involved in these situations reaffirms the patterns that have been clear for some time. Even though a given year’s activity allows for investigation of a limited number of countries, the special rapporteur argues that all states have situations of discrimination or intolerance in respect to religion or belief, though these may manifest themselves in different ways and degrees. Furthermore, no single religion has a monopoly on religious extremism.

Driving forces include the pressures of aggressive nationalism (often linked to a religious identification of the majority); absence of religious tolerance, particularly in the absence of significant pluralism and diversity within a society; and the persistence of ethnic extremism. In many situations, the added factor is that such patterns often undermine the fundamental rights of women and discriminate against them. The special rapporteur’s report expands on the factors of extremism and the question of defamation of religion.

The phenomenon, obviously not new, but with some seeming resurgence, is the growth of state/religious actions against acts that are claimed to be defamatory or blasphemous. While blasphemy and defamation are not desirous or helpful patterns, the danger comes in the response. Legal prohibitions and criminal proceedings are used for the purposes of censorship of the right to criticize or raise questions about religious positions or practices. Extremists use the charges as a way of maintaining control, preventing legitimate criticism, and propagating obscurantism, most often in support of dominant religious groups over minority groups.

[Note: This section may be supplemented by material drawn from the Spring 2001, meeting of the Commission on Human Rights.]

b. Report on Racism and Religious Intolerance

The special rapporteur, in response to a specific request by the Human Rights Commission, submitted a study to the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, entitled: “Racial Discrimination and Religious Discrimination:
Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being. . . To be poor is to be hungry; to lack shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled. But for poor people, living in poverty is more that this. Poor people are particularly vulnerable to adverse events outside their control. They are often treated badly by the institutions of state and society and excluded from voice and power in those institutions.

The World Bank suggests that there is a broad social context that contributes to poverty, an approach that would belie the often smug assertion: “You are poor because you are lazy.”

Poverty is the result of economic, political and social processes that interact with each other and frequently reinforce each other in ways that exacerbate the deprivation in which poor people live. . . Poverty outcomes are also greatly affected by social norms, values, and customary practices that, within the family, the community, of the market, lead to exclusion of women, ethnic and racial groups, or the socially disadvantaged.

The World Bank surveys the world conditions of 6 billion people—2.8 billion live on less than $2 a day, and of these, 1.2 billion live on less than $1 a day. The gap is wide. The average income in the richest countries is 37 times the average in the 20 poorest, and the gap has doubled in the last 40 years. While the World Bank report lines out seven basic development goals for the next fifteen years, such as reduction of the proportion of people living under $1 a day by half, it is the threefold strategy to achieve those goals that is, perhaps, most of interest in human rights terms. That strategy is to

• promote opportunity for people through jobs, credit, roads, electricity, education—the elements necessary to enable growth;

• facilitate their empowerment through such means as access to government and economic decision-makers and holding those forces accountable in political terms; and

• enhance security through the reduction of vulnerability in both its personal and social aspects, e.g. sickness or disability, or major natural disasters and economic shocks to whole systems.

Poverty has also been addressed in the Human Development Report 2000, the regular report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which focused on “Human Rights and Human Development.” Amid all of the economic data and analysis, the message of the report is quite clear:

Human rights and human development share a common vision and a common purpose—to secure the freedom, well-being and dignity of all people everywhere.

The report argues that every religious and culture tradition celebrates human dignity and freedom. While it also argues that the mark of a civilization is the respect it gives the ideals, it stresses the reality that every society in history has violated the ideals.

Human rights assert the idea that all people have “claims to social arrangements that protect them from the worst abuses and deprivations—and that secure the freedom for a life of dignity.” Human development is the process that enables the enhancing of human capabilities, expanding the choices and opportunities for an individual to have a life of respect and value. Rights provide moral legitimacy and the principle of social justice for the process of human development. Development focuses on the socioeconomic context necessary for the achievement of human freedom. Each is essential for the other. Each requires the duties and obligations of responsible actors to assure their achievement.

The Human Development Report 2000 reviews the results of the past half-century. They include the following:

• The acceptance of the concepts of the universality of rights and the equality of all peoples;

the evolution of a holistic view that civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights belong together and are inseparable;
• The acceptance of human rights, in theory, as an achievable collective goal for humanity;

• The commitment to an international system with the institutions, standards, laws, and processes to enable that realization; and

• The assertion that the state is accountable under international law with obligations to ensure respect, protection, and fulfillment of and for those rights and developments.

The report discusses three major threats to human freedom as we move into the 21st century: the occasion and virility of internal conflicts that deny human dignity and rights and destroy human community; the deepening spread of poverty that threatens to reverse many of the gains that have been made toward human development during the last half-century; and the growing inequality and marginalization of poor countries and peoples out of any proportion with the past.

Finally, the report makes a number of recommendations, among them that

• the norms, institutions, laws, and economic structures that secure human freedom must be strengthened;

• democracy must be strengthened through the inclusiveness of people, protection of minorities, and the separation of powers;

• poverty must be eradicated in order to achieve both human rights and human development;

• responsibility and accountability for the protection and guarantees of human rights must become a global responsibility;

• every institution of society, including civil, political, religious, economic, at every level must be involved in the attainment of the goal of human freedom and development for all.

A second special report from the UNDP narrows the focus “Overcoming Human Poverty 2000.” This report calls for a new global strategy against poverty. While noting that most poverty-stricken countries have done the data analysis on their poverty, and many have devised plans to reduce poverty, only a third have developed genuine action plans, with explicit targets, adequate budgets, and effective organizations. The UNDP report suggests that one of the critical problems in reducing poverty and the human rights deprivations related thereto, is the absence of effective governance and government. This is considered the “missing link.” The report is descriptive of the programmatic efforts of UNDP to help provide this link.

The concern for poverty is also expressed in a resolution on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2000 that reaffirmed, among other things that

• extreme poverty and exclusion from society constitute a violation of human dignity and urgent national and international action is therefore required to eliminate them;

• the right to life includes within it existence in human dignity with the minimum necessities of life;

• the existence of widespread absolute poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights and renders democracy and popular participation fragile;

• for peace and stability to endure, national and international action and cooperation are required to promote a better life for all in larger freedom, a critical element of which is the eradication of poverty;

• special attention must be given to the plight of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of extreme poverty.


In 1995, governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing adopted a Platform for Action addressing twelve major issues related to the rights and conditions of women around the world. In 2000, that document was reviewed at the United Nations in New York at a special session, informally identified as Beijing+5, whose purposes were to review the Platform for Action, the achievements since 1995, the challenges and the obstacles that remain. The debates at both events were often contentious. While the purposes of the review foreclosed revision of the Beijing platform, that did not prevent efforts to reopen sensitive issues, including those related to reproductive rights, understandings of the role of the family, and abortion.

There were new developments to note. First, a commitment was made to stop “honor crimes” and forced marriages, both being considered violations of the human rights of women. The first allows, in some societies, for the murder of one’s wife to defend one’s own so-called honor. The second involves the practice in some societies of forcing women, often very young, into marriages arranged by families for economic or political purposes—marriages that do not allow for the free consent of the bride.

Second, an examination of the negative impact of globalization on women, first given prominence in Beijing, was more thorough. Developing countries sought to highlight the negative effects of globalization, structural adjustment polices, trade liberalization, and debt on women. The United States has opposed such linkages. The feminization of poverty, nevertheless, was
duly stressed.

A third main area of concern, often contentious, was and is the question of women’s health issues. Forces that had opposed agreements on the reproductive rights issues at Beijing were augmented in numbers in New York and bolstered by aggressiveness. Nevertheless, the Beijing positions were reaffirmed. Added calls were made to help in the prevention of maternal mortality through more adequate delivery of health care, and the prevention of neonatal tetanus, which remains a problem in some forty countries and claims 500,000 lives a year. Emphasis was placed also on education programs that would help men understand the importance of practicing safe sex, given the growing concern regarding the AIDS pandemic.

8. The UN Human Rights Commission—Conclusion of Protocols for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Related to the concerns for the well-being of the world’s children, the UN Commission for Human Rights completed the drafting and approval in 2000, of two “Protocols” related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In international law one, usage of a “Protocol” is as a supplement to an international treaty often relating to one specific aspect of the existing agreement. The Human Rights Commission has been working in recent years to prepare protocols on two issues related to that convention. One is to correct what many considered at the time an egregious mistake, consciously made because of the politics of the time, namely the age when it was permissible to conscript children. The second is to address more specifically, a condition related to the welfare of children the world over that has caught the world’s attention, namely the growing commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The CRC was drafted during the 80s, completed in 1989, and open for ratification in 1990. All of the aspects of the convention were intended to apply to children 18 years of age or less except for Article 38, which dealt with conscription and use of child soldiers. That Article, as written, sought to protect children from involvement in hostilities only up to the age of 15, a tragic reflection on the reality that children were conscripted, pressed, or coerced into military service at even younger ages. The United States government, in fact, supported by previous Presbyterian General Assembly actions included the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (considered to be a major part
of the International Bill of Rights), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This latter convention is the most universally ratified human rights convention in the world. Only two countries have not ratified it: the U. S. and Somalia. Somalia has not had a functioning government for some time. Its recently formed government has announced that it intends to ratify it as soon as possible. President George H. W. Bush turned down the opportunity to sign it in 1990 at the World Summit. President Bill Clinton authorized Ambassador Madeleine Albright to sign it during his first term, but did not pursue its ratification with the Senate. During his last weeks in office, President Clinton signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, a treaty closely related to human rights concerns, as it creates the instrument to bring to justice people who have been involved in massive human rights abuses, including genocide, crimes of war, and crimes against humanity. Thus far, Senate leadership has opposed any U.S. consideration of ratification. The future commitment of the U.S. to the promotion and defense of human rights remains unclear.

III. Regional Updates

A. North America

The world’s attention turned to the United States (U. S.) during the 2000 presidential elections. Other nations watched closely as the legislative and court systems attempted to untangle the web of confusion surrounding the selection of a new president. Some marveled that a true democracy could find its way without a political coup or bloodshed. Others were dismayed at the factual or perceived disenfranchisement of millions of voters and wondered how such a thing could happen in the premier world’s democracy. It will probably take several years to truly determine what is really the truth. The fact is that we may never know. In the North America update 2000–2001, human rights concerns on the U.S. region of the continent are addressed.

1. Civil Rights

   a. The Rights of Incarcerated Women

   The rights of incarcerated women in the U.S. are often forgotten. The United Nations (UN) Fourth World Conference on Women stated that the governments of the world must:

   Review and amend criminal laws and procedures, as necessary, to eliminate any discrimination against women in order to ensure that criminal law and procedures guarantee women effective protection against, and prosecution of, crimes directed at or disproportionately affecting women, regardless of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and ensure that women defendants, victims and/or witnesses are not revictimized or discriminated against in the investigation and prosecution of crimes . . . . (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, September 1995, p. 71.)

   The human rights organization, Amnesty International holds the plight of incarcerated women as one of its foci. When looking at the U.S. Amnesty reports that:

   • Approximately 138,000 women are incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons.
   • The number of U.S. women inmates has more than tripled since 1985.
   • About 40 percent of women in prison violated drug laws.
   • About 25 percent are in prison for committing a violent crime.
   • African American women’s rate of imprisonment is nearly 4 times that of European American women.
   • Hispanic women’s rate of imprisonment is nearly 4 times that of European American women.
   • Around 200,000 children under the age of 18 have an incarcerated mother.
   • Eighty thousand women in U.S. prisons and jails are parents, many are single parents.
   • Thirteen hundred babies were born to women in prison in 1997–98 and more than 2,200 pregnant women were incarcerated (Amnesty International USA, Fact Sheets “Not Part of My Sentence: Violations of the Human Rights of Women in Custody,” 2000).

   There are several factors to investigate while looking at both the federal and state prison system in the U.S. and incarcerated women. Among them are medical neglect and sexual abuse.

   (1) Medical Neglect of Imprisoned Women

   It should not come as a surprise to justice advocates that women do not get adequate medical attention while incarcerated. Many of these women come out of situations of poverty where the availability and quality of care varies greatly. Furthermore, there is inadequate funding for medical staff, equipment, and programs in some of these institutions. Therefore, it has been difficult for many penal facilities to attract and maintain medical personnel.

   Women prisoners who suffer from treatable illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, sickle cell anemia, cancer, late-term miscarriages, and seizures often have no or little access to medical attention. This has resulted in death or
premature injury for newborn babies. It is not unusual for a nonmedical staffperson to be the one who first assesses the nature of the prisoner’s illness before medical attention is sought.

There is also a failure to deliver the medication necessary for the treatment of HIV/AIDS for those prisoners who find that they have contracted that disease. Mental health staff or treatment is lacking as well.

In 1994, the last year when such figures were recorded, the National Institute of Corrections found that only half the women incarcerated had been given reproductive health services including regular mammograms and pap smears. The shackling of prisoners, including pregnant ones, is policy in federal and state prisons. Birth complications such as hemorrhages or a decrease in the fetal heart rate may occur during the shackling process. Furthermore, if a caesarean section is needed, a delay of even five minutes could result in permanent brain damage to the baby (Amnesty International USA, Fact Sheet #4, “Medical Neglect of Women in US Prisons,” 2000).

(2) Sexual Abuse While in Prison

Sexual abuse of women by male prison guards is seen as the most egregious of the situations suffered by women while in prison. Women prisoners talk of a sense of powerlessness and humiliation they experience in these institutions. Seventy percent of the guards in women’s correctional facilities are men. There are correctional officials who subject female prisoners to groping during body searches, sexual extortion, sexual assault, and rape. Rape, under incarcerated circumstances, is considered to be torture by both the United Nations Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which have been ratified by the U.S. It seems ironic, however, that the U.S. has not ratified the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This latter convention includes the right to not be subjected to gender-based violence.

Women prisoners have reported being watched by male guards as they undress, shower, or use the toilet. If they complain to correctional officials, they run the risk of brutal retaliation, threats to their children at home, or being placed in administrative segregation. Guards often have access to prisoners’ files and will see any complaint lodged against him.

It must be acknowledged that there are some women who may initiate a sexual relationship between themselves and a guard in exchange for other privileges. When and if the woman tries to end the relationship, a power dynamic exists that may make ending it impossible. To protect women and the integrity of correctional officials, sexual contact between them and correctional officials should be criminalized and so-called consent must not be allowed as a defense of the official (Amnesty International Fact Sheet #5, “Sexual Abuse & Women in Prison,” 2000).

b. Capital Punishment

In the year 2000, as the momentum to abolish the death penalty continued around the world including in the United States, the 212th General Assembly (2000) reaffirmed the Presbyterian church’s historic commitment to that position. The assembly overwhelmingly approved an overture that called for “an immediate moratorium on all executions in all jurisdictions that impose capital punishment” and directed the Stated Clerk to communicate that message to state and national leaders (Minutes, 2000, Part I, p. 476. This marks the sixth time that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor bodies have called for its elimination (Minutes, UPCUSA, 1959, Part I, p. 384; Minutes, UPCUSA, 1965, Part I, p. 50; Minutes, PCUS, 1966, Part I, p. 89; Minutes, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, pp. 484–85; Minutes, 1985, Part I, p. 84).

Public support for capital punishment declined in 2000 due to increasing doubts about its reliability and fairness. Six more wrongfully convicted men were released from death row, bringing the total to ninety since 1973. A landmark study done by Columbia University Law School researchers found that two-thirds of death sentences handed down by trial courts since 1973 were reversed on appeal, and, upon retrial, four-fifths of the defendants did not receive a second death sentence. Despite international legal prohibitions and substantial foreign and domestic criticism, four juveniles were executed. And racism continues to mar the capital punishment process: minorities made up half of those executed in 2000, while 76 percent of their victims were white. A study by the U.S. Justice Department found that a disproportionate percentage of minorities faced federal capital charges.

This evidence of bias and error caused support for the death penalty to drop to 64 percent, a significant decline when compared to 71 percent in 1999 and 75 percent in 1977 (Harris Polls). After thirteen men were released from death row in Illinois, Governor George Ryan declared a moratorium on executions in January 2000. The New Hampshire legislature passed a bill to abolish the death penalty, though it was unable to override a gubernatorial veto. Germany sued the United States in the International Court of Justice for executing two of its citizens who were not informed of their right to consular assistance under the Vienna Convention. At the end of the year, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan received a petition signed by 3.2 million people around the world that called for a global moratorium on capital punishment.

While support for capital punishment has declined, the number of executions dipped only slightly. In 2000,
state governments executed eighty-five people, a 13 percent drop over the previous year. Texas executed almost half of that number (40), and the South was responsible for 89 percent of all executions. More than 3,700 people live on death rows in 37 states, the U.S. government, and the U.S. military.

c. Sexual Orientation

Over the last few years, a subheading on sexual orientation has been included in the U.S. civil rights section of the annual human rights update. The U.S. Congress has still not approved legislation that would bring protection to those who are discriminated against based on their sexual orientation. This discrimination often happens in employment, housing, choice of power of attorney in case of illness or social services.

The 190th General Assembly (1978) spoke out against discrimination toward gay and lesbian people. The assembly declared that

persons who manifest homosexual behavior must be treated with the profound respect and pastoral tenderness due to all people of God. There can be no place within the Christian faith for the response to homosexual persons of mingled contempt, hatred, and fear, that is called homophobia . . . . There is no legal, social, or moral justification for denying homosexual persons access to the basic requirements of human social existence. (Minutes, UPCUSA,1978, Part I, p. 263)

d. Hate Crimes

The Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice maintains a web page on hate crime research statistics and information (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/hate/publications.htm). The latest statistical information on this page is from 1998. Getting these crimes properly reported by local jurisdictions has been difficult. The data indicates that 10,730 law-enforcement agencies participated in reporting eligible crimes as based on hatred. “These agencies represented over 216 million United States inhabitants, and reported a total of 7,755 hate crime incidents to the FBI in 1998. These reported incidents involved a total of 9,235 offenses, 9,722 victims, and 7,489 known offenders” (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: “Hate Crime, Research and Statistics,” p. 3).

2. Political Rights

a. Campaign Finance Reform

The issue of campaign finance reform is one of importance to the general public. With each election, it becomes apparent that a person of ordinary means would never be able to afford to run for many national and state offices. For example, the cost of the 2000 election year presidential campaigns surpassed the cost of previous presidential elections.

The House of Representatives approved the Shays (R-CT) Meehan (D-MA) bill in both the 1998 (105th Congress) and the 1999 (106th Congress). The Senate could not come to agreement on the Shays/Meehan version or Senate versions of the bill as introduced by Senators MaCain (R-AZ) and Feingold (D-WI). Just days prior to the 2000 elections, the Federal Elections Commission reported that $800.7 million had been raised by Congressional candidates across the nation according to the pre-election reports that were filed by October 18, 2000. This represented a 39 percent increase in fund raising and a 42 percent increase in spending over the 1998 Congressional race totals. Congress is under great pressure to do something about campaign fund raising in the 107th session (2001/2002). More detailed information can be found on the web site of the Federal Election Commission (FEC) (www.fec.gov).

b. Census Undercount and Minority Voting Rights

Our representation in Congress is determined by the number of persons in our area as based on the latest Census count. As the nation’s population shifts from one region of the country to another region, then so should the district lines of the Representatives in the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, the Census Bureau has not been successful in its attempt to get an accurate count either in the 1990 or the 2000 Census.

The Census Bureau reported that the 1990 Census undercounted approximately four million people. Many of the undercounted were racial ethnic minorities. These often vulnerable populations were probably not fully represented in the House. Further locality-by-locality information on the 1990 disproportionate census undercount can be found on the web: www.civilrights.org/crlibrary/issues/census/6.1.html.

In light of the 1990 census undercount, the Census Bureau, civil rights groups, and some members of Congress asked that a statistical sampling method be used. This method, developed by the National Academy of Sciences, would give greater determination of actual population in an area. The decision went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which found that a sampling method could be used to discover the numbers of inhabitants for social service and public benefits purposes, but that a direct count number would have to be used to redraw congressional district lines. The public will have two sets of Census figures from which to draw information. This Supreme Court decision means that as the congressional district lines are redrawn, the number of low-income and minority citizens who are not counted will increase.

3. Economic Rights

Living Wage

By all economic indicators, the U.S. has just come through an unprecedented period of substantial economic growth that has resulted in the lowest unemployment rate
in history. In spite of this, there still exist the issue of fair wages, particularly in a booming economy. There is still the question of the working poor and how best to address their needs. As stated in legislation co-sponsored by 91 members of the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, workers should be able to expect “an hourly wage necessary for such employees to earn, while working 40 hours a week on a full-time basis, the amount of the Federal poverty level for a family of 4” (as published in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of section 673(2) of the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981, or $8.20 an hour, whichever is greater” (H.R. 4353 of the 106th Congress—To Provide for a Livable Wage for Employees under Federal Contracts and Subcontracts).

It is clear that some of our elected officials as well as justice advocates feel that a living wage is an important concept in a nation where we purport to speak of the pursuit of opportunity for all residents. By design, opportunity should include sustainable wages for workers and their families.

4. Social and Cultural Rights
   a. Health Care

   The lack of accessible health care for all is a contributing factor in the quality of life of many groups in the United States (U.S.). Consider the following statistics from the Health Resources and Services Administration Office of Minority Health Report “Health Care Rx: Access for All” and the “Healthy People 2010 Report.”

   - Infant mortality rates are 2.5 times higher for African Americans and 1.5 times higher for American Indians than whites.

   - African American men under 65 have prostate cancer at nearly twice the rate of whites, and women of Vietnamese origin have cervical cancer at nearly five times the rate of white women.

   - The age-adjusted death rate in 1995 for African Americans attributable to heart disease was 147 deaths per 100,000 people, compared to 105 per 100,000 for whites and 108 per 100,000 overall.

   - The number of new AIDS cases among African Americans is now greater than the number of new AIDS cases among whites. AIDS is the third leading cause of death for Hispanic men aged 25–44. In the last year, 19 percent of new AIDS cases were among Hispanic adults and adolescents.

   - The prevalence of diabetes in Hispanics, American Indians, and Alaska Natives is nearly double that of whites.

   It is clear from the above information that the U.S. still has a way to go before the world will see that all citizens of this nation have equal opportunity and access to health care as one of the basic offerings of a just society.

   b. Children

   As the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) continues to lift up the plight of children during its Year of the Child emphasis, it is important to acknowledge that there are many children in the U.S. who have not benefitted from the nation’s robust economy. According to the Children’s Defense Fund, 12.1 million children live in poverty; 11.9 million children have no health insurance; Head Start serves only 50 percent of eligible children; child-care assistance reaches only one in ten eligible children; and millions of families with children struggle each month to have adequate housing, either paying more than half of their income in rent or doubling up with other families in overcrowded and substandard housing.

   c. Immigrants

   In recent decades, the U.S. has gone back and forth regarding its openness to new immigrants. In 1996, Congress passed the stringent Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility ACT (IIRIRA), which called for immediate deportation of immigrants who might have had a minor brush with the law sometime in their past. This policy, which has been referred to as the “mandatory removal rules,” has been applied to young adults whose adoptive parents may not have completed all the necessary citizenship papers; to domestic disputes and shoplifting. Those who were caught up in the strictness of IIRIRA were subject to deportation to a country they may not have remembered and had forgotten the language. Thus, the 1996 IIRIRA policy has had an immediate impact on immigrants living in the U.S.

   In 1999, advocates for just immigrant laws began a campaign entitled, “FIX96.” This campaign called for judges to be given the discretion to determine if a crime is severe enough to warrant deportation. Labor Unions, now in need of workers, have also called for a change in the IIRIRA.

   While the U.S. continues to discourage illegal entry across the borders into the U.S., it continues to happen. Media outlets in the southwest U.S. have reported disturbing events of vigilante-style attacks against undocumented persons who enter from Central America or Mexico. Twenty attacks have been noted. Vehicles have been stopped on public roads by so-called vigilantes who may detain people and assault them at gunpoint. Shootings are not uncommon.

   5. Religious Rights

   During much of 1996, the U.S. experienced a rash of church fires in the African American community. As a
result, the Department of the Treasury’s Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco Taskforce (ATF) established the National Church Arson Task Force (NCATF) that still continues to exist. Some of the 1996 fires were racially motivated. Others were the result of hatred aimed at the faith group represented by the burned structure. Although the fires were predominately in African American churches, they were not limited to them. Religious bigotry is a factor in U.S. society. Synagogues have also been attacked.

The NCATF September 2000 report gives the following highlights regarding the final outcome of their investigations:

- The NCATF has opened investigations into 945 arsons, bombings, or attempted bombings that have occurred at houses of worship between January 1, 1995, and August 15, 2000.

- Federal, state, and local authorities have arrested 431 suspects in connection with 342 of the 945 incidents.

- The 36.2 percent rate of arrest in NCATF arson cases is more than double the 16 percent rate of arson arrests nationwide.

- Between January 1, 1995, and August 15, 2000, Federal and state prosecutors successfully obtained convictions of 305 defendants in connection with 224 incidents. Most of the incidents involved arson at houses of worship, but some involved the use of firearms, bombs, or violent threats. (National Church Arson Task Force, “Fourth Year Report for the President,” September 2000, p. 1)

B. Africa—South of the Sahara

1. Civil Rights

   a. Freedom of Expression

   While a number of African countries—Senegal, Nigeria, and South Africa—boast lively and critical media, conflict threatens free expression in many parts of the continent. Three of the five journalists killed in Africa during 2000 died while covering the conflict in Sierra Leone, while the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had a chilling effect on press freedom in all countries involved.

   Angola was repeatedly cited by human rights organizations for the harassment of journalists. In October 2000, three journalists received prison sentences for defaming President José Eduardo dos Santos and other officials. The government has proposed a new press law that would empower it to ban or seize publications at its discretion and to imprison journalists who publish “news or facts . . . which attack the honor and reputation of the President.”

   During Zimbabwe’s fiercely-fought election campaign, the minister of information instructed the state-owned media to write positive stories about the government and to discredit the opposition. State channels did not broadcast opposition party advertisements. At the end of October 2000, the government said it would charge senior staff at two Harare newspapers with defamation. An official statement warned that the government was planning to amend press laws in order to silence the papers “once and for all.”

   In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), both pro-government and antigovernment forces have attempted to suppress free expression. In September 2000, the government banned ten independent and church-owned radio and television stations for failing to abide by strict controls on broadcast content. Human Rights groups have repeatedly condemned rebel factions for attempting to silence civil society activists through detention, assault, and intimidation.

   Liberia and Kenya also imposed new restrictions on radio broadcasting. The closure of Liberia’s only national independent broadcast station left the airwaves dominated by two stations owned by Liberian President Charles Taylor.

b. Abuses by Military and Paramilitary Forces

   Following the signing of a July 1999 peace accord between the government of Sierra Leone and Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, human-rights abuses—particularly the limb amputations and other atrocities carried out by the RUF—initially declined. However, the RUF failed to honor its pledge to disarm and demobilize its soldiers. In February 2000, the United Nations (UN) expanded the mandate of the UN Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), so that UN peacekeepers could take over from the withdrawing West African peacekeeping force. The RUF saw the transition as an opportunity to resume hostilities. At the beginning of May 2000, RUF soldiers killed four UN peacekeepers and captured 500. In response, a throng of demonstrators from church and community groups gathered outside the home of RUF leader Foday Sankoh, calling on the RUF to lay down their arms. The RUF soldiers fired on the crowd, killing nineteen. Nine days later, Sankoh was captured in Freetown.

   Following the collapse of the peace accord, there was a marked increase in human rights abuses by both rebel and government forces, including indiscriminate attacks on civilians, abduction, sexual violence, conscription of child soldiers, looting, torture, and forced labor. Thousands fled their homes, bringing the total number of people displaced by the war to more than 800,000. The
UN has since increased the UNAMISIL force to 13,000, giving the mission a more robust mandate. It has also authorized the creation of a special war crimes court.

Despite a return to democratic rule, the Nigerian government continued to use “indiscriminate lethal force in response to criminal activity, ethnic conflict, or protests related to oil production” in the Niger Delta. Although the blanket repression of the former military regime has ended, military and paramilitary mobile police still resort to assault—even summary execution—to suppress opposition. In March and April 2000, mobile police units in Ogoniland killed several civilians and detained others. Soldiers and naval personnel killed more than a dozen protesters and assaulted many more in incidents throughout the year.

The Nigerian government has also ignored the calls of human rights activists for an official inquiry to establish responsibility for more than 10,000 reported abuses suffered by the Ogoni people during the previous military regime. Some cases are due to be reviewed by Nigeria’s new Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, but critics fear that the investigation will be hamstrung by resource limitations.

The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo continues to detain people for violating a ban on political activities. Security agencies single out vocal opposition groups for repression, arresting leaders of the Innovative Forces for Unity and Solidarity, dispersing gatherings of the Collective for the Survival of Democracy, and detaining dozens of opposition party members. In rebel-held areas, soldiers also routinely arrest opponents, civil society leaders, and human rights activists, often detaining them in secret places. Human rights groups have documented numerous atrocities, including execution, rape, torture, and large-scale destruction of property.

2. Political Rights

a. Democratization

From 1999–2000, democratic institutions and practices were strengthened in many African countries. More than one quarter of the region’s fifty-four nations went to the polls during 2000. Voters in Senegal, Ghana, and Mauritius toppled incumbent governments, while polls in Mozambique (December 1999), Ethiopia, and Tanzania gave renewed mandates to existing leaders. Guinea, Malawi, and South Africa elected local officials. Zimbabwe, Côte d’Ivoire, and Uganda held national referenda on constitutional and electoral matters. Despite these positive signs, much remains to be done to ensure that governments reflect their countries’ ethnic diversities, devolve power to local areas, and enable ordinary citizens to contribute meaningfully to shaping public policy.

Most elections were generally recognized as free and fair, but social and political conflicts complicated some of the polls and may undermine the legitimacy of these outcomes. Ethiopia’s May 2000 elections were marred by isolated violence and opposition allegations of irregularities favoring the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front. In Sudan, the ruling National Congress Party claimed a landslide victory even though elections were either not held or suspended in nearly one-fifth of the country’s 270 geographical constituencies due to civil war and procedural challenges filed by opposition candidates.

In February 2000, voters in Zimbabwe rejected a new constitution. The referendum was widely seen as a defeat for President Robert Mugabe’s ZANU-PF party and a sign of the growing popularity of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2000 were postponed until June 2000, setting the stage for a contentious campaign. War veterans and other government supporters eager to shore up ZANU-PF’s traditional rural base invaded more than 1,000 white-owned farms, ostensibly to redistribute land. In practice, they used the farms as bases from which to attack opposition activists. At least thirty people were killed, an unknown number of women were raped, and thousands were assaulted or had their homes ransacked. Often the police refused to intervene, making it dangerous for opposition candidates to campaign in some parts of the country. Nevertheless, the MDC won 47 percent of the vote, raising hopes that key national issues such as land reform, the economy, corruption, and constitutional change will receive rigorous consideration.

A 1999 Christmas Eve coup in Côte d’Ivoire interrupted a national election campaign already marred by the exclusion of one opposition party and restrictions on political activity. Many Ivorians initially welcomed the coup, especially when the military released political activists jailed by the former government, held talks with civil society, created a broadly representative interim government, and established a commission to draft a new electoral code and constitution. By May 2000, however, hope began to fade. The interim government was reshuffled to replace several political party representatives with military officers. Coup leader General Robert Guei announced his candidacy for president and barred opposition candidate Alassane Ouattara from running.

A boycott called by Ouattara’s Rally of Republicans (RPR) contributed to a low turnout in presidential polling on October 22, 2000. When early returns showed Laurent Gbagbo’s Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) in the lead, General Guei dissolved the National Electoral Commission and pronounced himself the winner. Mass demonstrations erupted, prompting General Guei to flee the country. Gbagbo assumed the presidency, provoking fights between previously united RDR and FPI partisans. While the military stayed in their barracks, police and
paramilitary forces often sided openly with the FPI. More than 150 people died and hundreds more were injured.

Two dozen more died in the run-up to the December 10, 2000 parliamentary elections. The FPI won a plurality of the 225 parliamentary seats, but RDR protests prevented polling in twenty-seven northern constituencies. The second-place Democratic Party threatened to boycott the new parliament, leaving Ivorians facing continued instability in 2001.

Somali reconciliation talks in Djibouti produced an unexpected agreement, clearing the way for the creation of a 245-member parliament and the selection of Somalia’s first president since the collapse of Siad Barre’s regime in 1991. Seats in the new parliament, which was sworn in in August 2000, were allocated amongst the countries various clans. Ten percent of the seats were reserved for women. Most Somalis seem to have embraced the accord as a way to end a decade of fighting. However, many warlords, fearing the dissipation of their personal power, have withdrawn the support they initially (and reluctantly) gave to the arrangement. The new government also faces a secessionist challenge from Somaliland, which has declared itself an independent republic.

b. Security Matters

Even with the resolution of a two-year border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the continent remains blighted by a chain of major wars stretching from Angola in the southwest, through the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Great Lakes region to Sudan in the northeast.

In Angola’s long-running civil war, government forces made territorial gains against Jonas Savimbi’s Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The rebels reverted to hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, enabling them to strike in government-held areas. As many as 2.5 million people—20 percent of the country’s population—are thought to be displaced by the war, and more than 2 million rely on food aid. Road access is restricted for security reasons, requiring most humanitarian assistance to be delivered by air. Reports of UNITA attacks on civilians—including deliberate mutilations—have increased. Conscription of children as young as ten remains commonplace.

Government forces have been less frequently accused of abuses. The government pursued a scorched earth policy in some campaigns and has allegedly carried out extrajudicial executions. Women in the central highlands report that they experienced an increase in rape and assault at the hands of government soldiers. Civil society organizations claim police and military personnel have murdered suspected UNITA sympathizers in some provinces.

United Nations sanctions remained in force against UNITA, which has twice broken peace treaties and revived the war after losing internationally supervised elections. However, a March 2000 report named a broad range sanctions-busters against UNITA accomplices—Bulgarian and South African arms dealers, gem smugglers in Namibia and Zambia, rebel movements in the DRC, and public officials in several African governments. A Catholic-sponsored Congress for Peace in July 2000 brought together a broad cross-section of church, civil society, and government representatives to explore strategies for peace.

The complex and devastating war in the Democratic Republic of Congo entered its third year. The Congolese Armed Forces of President Laurent Kabila’s government continued to control much of the country, with the backing of troops from Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia. Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) forces occupied parts of the north east, with the support of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. In 1999, the RCD split into two factions, with one (RCD-Goma) loyal to the Rwanda and the other (RCD-ML) aligned with Uganda. The RCD-ML has since splintered further, largely along ethnic lines. In northwestern Equateur province, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) enjoyed some degree of popular support, as well as assistance from Uganda. Insurgents opposing the governments of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda are active in the DRC and sometimes operate in alliance with troops loyal to the Congolese government. A number of local warlords also command autonomous militia, known collectively as “mayi-mayi.” Some mayi-mayi leaders have been appointed to senior posts in the Congolese Armed Forces.

None of the belligerents adhered fully to their commitments under last year’s Lusaka cease-fire agreement. Rwandese and Ugandan forces fought particularly destructive battles for the control of Kisangani in May and June 2000. Seven hundred civilians were killed and one thousand more were seriously wounded as the nominal allies clashed in the city. Fighting cut electricity and water supplies and caused widespread property damage. Uganda ultimately withdrew its troops. Rwanda also offered to pull back once UN peacekeeping forces arrived. In August 2000, President Kabila dropped his opposition to the deployment of UN military observers—less than 24 hours after declaring that he would suspend implementation of the Lusaka accords.

The war has displaced more than 1.3 million Congolese. Another five million have been completely or partially separated from their traditional supply routes and from humanitarian assistance. As many as 300,000 civilians have fled to Uganda and other neighboring countries. The General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church of Congo and the Presbyterian Church of Kinshasa have called on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to work for open dialogue among all stakeholders, the withdrawal of foreign troops, the establishment of a UN peacekeeping presence, and free and fair elections for
national leadership.

Following the death of former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, former South African President Nelson Mandela took over as chief mediator of peace talks in Burundi’s civil war. Two rounds of talks in March and July 2000 produced a peace treaty, which was signed on August 28, 2000. The treaty calls for a democratically elected government in three years, and an ethnically balanced parliament and military. In an effort to secure the signatures of all parties, the text left a number of key areas open to renegotiation. The treaty had strong support from most Hutu parties, but met with resistance from Tutsis. Ultimately, six of ten Tutsi parties signed, although some hinted that they did so in order to access international assistance. A ceasefire, the release of political prisoners, and the dissolution of “regroupment camps” remain contentious issues.

On December 12, 2000, Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace agreement terminating a bloody two-year border war between the two neighbors. The Organisation of African Unity brokered treaty calls for an independent investigation into the causes of the war and the appointment of a neutral boundary commission to demarcate the border.

One hundred and thirty-nine countries have signed the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines, with 109 completing ratification. Forty-one of the sub-Saharan African nations are signatories, but important countries such as Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, and Somalia have yet to sign. Moreover, Angola, Ethiopia, and Sudan are thought to retain substantial stockpiles of landmines, despite being signatories to the treaty. In Angola, one of the world’s most-mined nations, many new landmines have been planted since the collapse of the 1998 peace deal, and the number of mine victims is up sharply.

3. Economic Rights

a. Control of Resources

As in the colonial era, Africa’s vast mineral wealth continues to be exploited primarily for the benefit of powerful local and international elites, rather than being used to improve the living standards of the continent’s impoverished majority. Where resources are controlled by individuals who lack popular accountability, the proceeds are all too often squandered on warfare and destruction.

Diamonds have become the main source of revenue, sustaining insurgent forces in Angola, Sierra Leone, and the DRC. De Beers estimates that “conflict” diamonds—gems mined in areas controlled by forces fighting a legitimate, internationally recognized government—accounted for at least $255 million (just under 4 percent) of global rough diamond production in 1999. Of these, more than half ($150 million) were thought to originate in Angola. The remainder came from Sierra Leone ($70 million) and the DRC ($35 million or more). As much as 20 percent of the rough diamond trade may involve “illicit” gems—those that have been stolen or used for criminal purposes, such as tax evasion or money laundering.

The United Nations has prohibited trade in rough diamonds originating in rebel-held areas of Angola and Sierra Leone, but without a global system for documenting a stone’s origin, the embargo is difficult to police. Conflict diamonds are typically transhipped through neighboring countries—Liberia, in particular, but also Togo, Zimbabwe, Congo-Kinshasa, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso—usually with the knowledge of government officials. Consequently, a broad range of church, development, and human rights organizations have called on the diamond industry and diamond-importing nations to implement effective measures to halt the deadly trade in illicit diamonds.

Just as Angola’s Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels depend on diamonds, the Angolan government relies on oil. Oil revenues, which represent 92 percent of Angola’s official export income, and oil-backed loans have been primary sources of funding for the Angolan budget, including defense spending. In April 2000, the International Monetary Fund reached an agreement with the Angolan government that could improve transparency and monitoring of the use of oil revenues.

Residents of Nigeria’s oil-rich Niger Delta have yet to realize substantial benefit from the natural assets extracted from their region. Although Nigeria’s 1999 constitution stipulates that 13 percent of the revenue derived from oil production should accrue to the state where it is produced, such payments have been slow to materialize. Protesters have adopted a variety of tactics—from demonstrations to hostage-taking—to press their demands for greater local control of oil reserves and fair payment for resources extracted. The situation has been complicated by unscrupulous commercial operators who breach pipelines in order to steal fuel to sell. In the past year, hundreds of people have died in explosions as they attempt to recover fuel from the leaking pipelines after commercial operators have left.

The “invasion” or “repossession” of roughly 1,000 white-owned farms in Zimbabwe returned land reform to the political agenda. Two decades after the end of minority rule, 4,000 white farmers still own about 30 percent of the country’s agricultural land. Notwithstanding the political objectives motivating many of the campaign’s leaders, the principle of land redistribution—if not the tactics used—clearly had resonance for landless Zimbabweans. Farm workers, who make up one quarter of the formal labor force, frequently
live in squalid conditions and rely on sub-subsistence wages and handouts from their affluent employers. Not surprisingly, farm workers have some of the highest rates of morbidity, malnutrition, mortality, and illiteracy in the country.

Similar concerns have been raised in South Africa, where as much as 87 percent of the land is in white hands. South Africa’s democratic government has only managed to redistribute one percent of the land, not the promised 30 percent. Only a handful of the roughly 70,000 restitution claims filed under 1994 legislation by those forcibly removed from their homes in the apartheid era have yet been resolved. Despite stern warnings from the government, a few land invasions have already taken place and more are threatened.

b. Debt

To the dismay of Jubilee 2000 activists, the annual “Group of Eight” (G-8) economic summit of industrial powers failed to announce new initiatives to cancel the crushing debts of the world’s poorest nations. Sub-Saharan Africa’s total debt now tops $230 billion. Consequently, Africans were compelled to pay $15 billion in interest to wealthy creditors during 1999. In some countries, as much as 40 percent of government revenue is earmarked for debt service, diverting vital resources from health, education, and other essential social investments.

In 1999, G-8 leaders had promised to write off 70 percent of the debts of 33 of the world’s poorest nations. However, long waiting periods, demanding conditions, and the failure of some countries—including the United States—to fulfill commitments to fund the plan meant that even “model” nations such as Uganda still had not had any debts canceled by mid-year. In November 2000, Congress appropriated $435 million for debt relief, raising hopes of more rapid action. Twenty countries were expected to be receiving debt relief by the end of 2000.

Anti-debt groups continued to raise serious concerns about the restrictive provisions of the “enhanced” Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. Research conducted by Oxfam International found that some countries—including Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia—were likely to end up paying more interest under the HIPC plan in the short to medium term. Even with partial debt relief, debt service payments would still consume more than 15 percent of annual revenues in six of the twenty countries likely to be included. In three (Cameroon, Malawi, and Zambia) interest payments would devour more than 40 percent of revenues. The International Monetary Fund later revised Zambia’s schedule of payments to defer the larger payments for three years, but it did not offer any additional debt relief.

4. Religious Rights

Although religious discrimination is not officially sanctioned by any sub-Saharan African government, religious differences are often a factor in social conflicts in diverse societies.

In Nigeria, which has roughly equal numbers of Christians and Muslims, religious tensions flared over the application of Sharia or Islamic law. The Nigerian constitution allows the use of Sharia law in domestic matters, such as marriage and inheritance involving Muslim litigants. However, it does not sanction the imposition of Sharia punishments, such as flogging, amputation and beheading, that violate the UN Convention Against Torture.

In October 1999, the Zamfara state announced that Sharia law would also be extended to criminal offenses. Since then, six other states in predominantly Muslim northern Nigeria have taken similar action. The change has been popular with many Muslims, but alarmed Christians. Despite official assurances that Christians will not be subject to Sharia law and penal code, Christian women in some areas have been forced to use gender-segregated public transportation alongside Muslim women. Christians have also been convicted of possession of alcohol.

Christian leaders are concerned that the imposition of Sharia law signals a new level of religious intolerance. Christian churches in three states have been burned by arsonists, and some Christians have had their homes and businesses attacked. In at least two states, officials have encouraged the formation of community groups to promote the implementation of Sharia law. Many Christians see these as vigilante organizations and are suspicious of their intent.

The matter precipitated several confrontations between Christians and Muslims, including a violent clash between pro- and anti-Sharia demonstrators in Kaduna in late February. Hundreds of people were killed and many more injured in a week of riots that also inflicted extensive damage on the Baptist Theological Seminary. According to a Kaduna-based nongovernmental organization, as many as 300 Christians were abducted and forced to renounce their faith during the conflict. Those who refused were killed.

Following the Kaduna carnage, the Country’s National Council of States, which includes the governors of all thirty-six states, decided to suspend the implementation of Sharia law. However, several governors have pressed ahead with the extension of Sharia law in defiance of the agreement. A number of leaders in both the Christian and Muslim communities are working together to head off further violence.

In Sudan, the government invoked Islamic law to justify a decree barring women from working in hotels, restaurants, and gas stations where they have direct
contact with men. Some Sudanese activists expressed fear that the move was a prelude to removing women from all public positions.

South Africa entrenched its constitutional protection of religious freedom—as well as racial and gender equity—with the enactment of new equality legislation in February 2000.

C. East Asia/Pacific

Economic recovery and democratization made steady progress in the region. South Korea recovered most rapidly from the effects of the 1997–98 economic collapse, although the key structural reforms are still in the process of being implemented. Millions of people in countries of East Asia have been laid off from their job, and are suffering from the effects of the collapse. For instance, people are experiencing a deeper impact of the economic collapse in the fabric of their social, cultural life, and confidence in the political leadership has been eroded. People are enraged over the downturn in their economic situation, rising unemployment, increasing price hikes, and falling living standards.

1. Civil Rights

The fundamental civil rights of expression, assembly, and association suffered setbacks during the year in China. Membership in the Falun Gong grew to several millions during the 1990s, as this group offered what it claims is a health-giving exercise regimen and a morally uplifting philosophy derived from Taoism, Buddhism, and the ideas of its founder, Li Hongzhi, an ex-government grain clerk now living in the United States. Alarmed by the size and organizational prowess of the group, in July 1999 China banned Falun Gong as an evil cult. Hundreds of its members have been sent to prison and labor camps. The China media sources have accused this group of conspiring against the government, cheating adherents, and causing 1,500 deaths, and waging a severe political, propaganda, and police campaign [cf. The Japan Times, December 14, 2000, p. 4]. The government also seized and destroyed Falun Gong literature, including more than 1 million books, in well publicized sweeps of homes and bookstores. Demonstrations continued at Tiananmen Square almost daily, but the police broke up these demonstrations at times with force.

Peace and justice issues continue to be a deep concern for the people of Okinawa, Japan. Concerned citizens of Okinawa continue to oppose the U.S. military bases that cause a negative environmental impact, a high rate of accidents, and an increase in crime due to the location of the bases, often in the midst of heavily populated cities. In addition, despite strong opposition from peace activists and religious groups, including our partner churches in Japan, the revised “Guidelines for Defense Cooperation Between Japan and the USA,” were upheld by the Japanese Diet. Both the “Guidelines for Defense Cooperation” and the existence of U.S. bases conflict with Japan’s Peace Constitution.

Protest against the U.S. military presence in the Republic of Korea has also continued. There has been an average of a thousand criminal incidents per year involving the U.S. military personnel stationed in Korea. These incidents include robbery, theft, rape, and killing of Korean civilians by U.S. servicemen. The culprits are often unpunished.

A majority of Korean people want a revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which was adopted soon after the Korean war (1950–1953). Under the present SOFA framework, a member of the U.S. service personnel who is accused of crime in South Korea is kept in the American military custody until he/she is convicted under the Korean judicial system. The Korean government does not, however, have full authority over criminal cases of U.S. troops, which is different from the situation in Japan.

The U.S. military command in Korea occupies a choice land in the heart of downtown Seoul, but the U.S. government has refused to pay fair rent for this property. The U.S. military bases in Korea cause environmental contamination by dumping chemical wastes into the streams and rivers and it refuses to clean up the waste. Some people feel that the U.S. military command acts as if it is an occupying force and that the U.S. does not really recognize South Korea’s sovereignty.

The issues of discrimination against minority people continue to be of concern to the people of East Asia and the Pacific. Minorities in the region often find themselves the victims of cultural or racial discrimination. The Burakumin, Ainu, and Koreans in Japan, Aborigines in Australia and Taiwan, Maoris in New Zealand, and cultural minorities in the Philippines often suffer at the hands of bigots.

Both in the People’s Republic of China and in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), civil rights continue to be restricted or denied. Citizens do not have the right to participate in any peaceful acts that could lead to a change in the government. Especially in North Korea, the government restricts freedom of civil movement and workers’ rights. In recent years, China has instituted more laws and regulations and the number of lawyers have increased. Open opposition to the Chinese Communist Party, however, is still not tolerated. Yet within the Chinese society, the people do enjoy much more freedom, as long as they do not criticize the government. North Korea prohibits freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and association. All forms of cultural and media activities are under the tight control of the North Korean government.

An outbreak of fighting between the government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MLF) occurred in the southwestern part of the Philippines when
peace talks faltered. Human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions and the torture or ill-treatment of suspected members of armed opposition groups security personnel, were reported. Abuses by opposition groups were also reported (cf. Amnesty International Report 2000, p. 193).

2. Political Rights

The People’s Republic of China is an authoritarian state in which political power resides in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party. Generally, the citizens lack the right to express opposition to the party-led political system. Despite its one-party system, a democratic process is slowly but indeed evolving in the People’s Republic. Politically, the Chinese Communist Party seems to have mellowed within the last twenty years. Many old ideological guards have been retired and phased out, and younger, better educated ones are coming into the party on the national, provincial, and local levels.

On December 20, 1999, Macau reverted from Portuguese to Chinese sovereignty and became a Special Administrative Region of the Peoples Republic of China. The Basic Law, Macau’s mini-constitution, provides for freedom of conscience, freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public.

In the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), the government denies its citizens their basic rights. The regime subjects its citizens to rigid controls. On the other hand, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) respects the human rights of its citizens. However, the existence of the National Security Law (NSL) continues to infringe upon citizen’s civil liberties, including the right to free expression. President Kim Dae Jung is in support of making revision of NSL to protect human rights. In 2000, President Kim won the Nobel Peace Prize. He initiated the summit meeting with Chairman Kim Jongil, the leader of North Korea, which took place in Pyongyang, North Korea, in June 2000. As a result of the summit meeting, the outlook for Korean reunification has brightened. North Korea and South Korea charted a path toward future reunification on the basis of reconciliation and unity of the people.

3. Economic Rights

The economic crisis that engulfed the Asian continent in 1997–98 has devastated the economies of several countries in East and Southeast Asia. The economic and social progress achieved in past decades have begun to collapse. The crisis continues to have wider implications for the countries in the region. Millions of people are unemployed, and in the case of Korea, the middle class has been virtually wiped out. The gap between the rich and poor has widened, and poverty and hunger are on the increase. Even in Japan, many employees have been laid off. The effects of the economic problems are also perceived as a contributing factor in the increase in the number of violations against the rights of workers.

To compete with the global market oriented economy, China has taken advantage of cheap labor as its most useful resource. Factory owners are trying to minimize any cost, including that of workers’ safety. Many industrial accidents do occur and workers sustain injuries and even death.

In the Philippines, millions of children are working on farms and some in factories, in an effort to help their parents cope and survive through a difficult economic period.

Globalized capital continues to move freely across national borders in search of optimized profits, and a cheap, controllable, and expendable global workforce. Migrant labor, therefore, has become an essential part of the global free-market system, with people leaving their countries for jobs. Human Rights Watch reports that tens of millions of people travel across national borders each year in search of employment. Economic forces in the sending country “push” migrants out when they are unable to find employment in adequately paying jobs; other migrants are “pulled” into the receiving country, usually by rapid economic growth which requires an inflow of cheap, unskilled labor. Migration between Asian countries has grown steadily since the early 1980s, when just over one million Asians were working in other countries in the region, to more than 6.5 million by mid-1997.” (cf. Human Rights Watch, September 2000, p. 16)

The largest migrant labor exporting country in East Asia is the Philippines. In 1998, some 400,000 Filipino women worked in Japan. Many of these women migrated to Japan as entertainers, and they are often forced to work as hostesses in bars or as prostitutes in the sex industry. They face all kinds of violence and exploitation. There are an estimated 150,000 non-Japanese women employed in the Japanese sex industry, primarily from other Asian countries such as Thailand and the Philippines (Human Rights Watch, September 2000, p. 16).

In Hong Kong, about 100,000 Filipino women work as domestic laborers. In Singapore, about 60,000 Filipino women work as domestic laborers. Taiwan and Korea each has hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from other Asian countries.

North Korea continues to suffer from famine due largely to the recent natural disaster and the failure of the socialist economy. Much of the population has been literally starving and many died of hunger. In search for food, people are crossing the northern border to China. It is estimated that there are more than 100,000 North Koreans in Northeast China, seeking food and work. More than three quarters of the migrants are women, who face the danger of being arrested by the Chinese police and or North Korean agents. And, 65 percent of all overseas migrant laborers are women.
4. Social and Cultural Rights

The abandonment of disabled children and some female children continues to be a concern in China. There are hundreds of such children who are placed in orphanages. Reasons for their abandonment include poverty, and their parents’ lack of knowledge about how to care for a child with a disability.

The aboriginal people in Taiwan continue to face difficulties in finding employment. They continue to be discriminated against. In recent years, an attempt has been made to encourage the aboriginals in Taiwan to speak their own language and maintain their traditional culture, but without much success. Many native Taiwanese have reverted back to the use of their tribal names and language.

Domestic violence and the divorce rate have increased in the region as the countries have become increasingly industrialized and urbanized. The 1997–98 Asian economic downfall has also contributed to an increase in family violence in some countries of the region.

5. Religious Rights

All the East Asia and the Pacific Rim countries provide for freedom of religion. It differs, however, how the freedom of religion is practiced from country to country. The constitutions of Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau, Fiji, and Vanuatu provide for freedom of religion, and the governments respect this right in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the year 2000.

In Japan, religious groups are not required to be registered or licensed. However, to receive official recognition as a religious organization, which brings tax benefits and other advantages, a group must register with local or national authorities as a “religious corporation.” In reality, almost all religious groups are registered in Japan. In response to Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attacks in 1995, an amendment has been made to the Religious Corporation Law for government to increase its oversight over religious groups and to require greater disclosure of financial assets by religious corporations. Aum Shinrikyo lost its legal status as a religious corporation in 1996 following the indictment of several members.

In Hong Kong and Macau, the Basic Law provides for freedom of religion, and the people of Hong Kong and Macau enjoy autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the “one country, two systems” concept that defines Hong Kong and Macau’s relationship to the rest of China.

In Taiwan, the authorities generally protect freedom of religion. While individual places of worship may register with local authorities, many choose not to register and operate as the personal property of their leaders. Registered organizations operate on a tax-free basis and are required to make annual reports of their financial operations.

The Republic of Korea provides for freedom of religion and the government respects this right in practice. The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Korea also provides for freedom of religious belief, but in practice the government discourages organized religious activity except that which is registered with the government. The constitution stipulates that religion should not be used for purposes of dragging in foreign powers or endangering public security. It is hard to say that religious freedom genuinely exist in North Korea.

Article 36 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China guarantees religious freedom. This article states the following:

- Citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief.
- No state organization, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.
- The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state.
- Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.

There are five religious groups that are officially recognized by the Chinese government: Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Taoism, and Islam. All churches, temples, mosques, monasteries, and other fixed locations for worship must be registered with the relevant patriotic associations. These registered organizations are legally protected. There are cases, however, in which officials overstep the bounds of appropriate official behavior. Furthermore, religious groups themselves have varied in their willingness to comply with registration requirements made by civil authorities. Many Protestant churches have registered and, in general, Christians prefer to witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ in a quiet manner that does not step out of line with governmental regulations. In 2000, reports indicated that a number of unregistered “meeting points” had been closed or destroyed.

There are concerns with regard to the potential impact of ethnic separatist movements upon religious freedom in China. The Chinese government prohibits religious manifestations that advocate Tibetan independence. The government authorities have tightened restrictions on the practice of Tibetan Buddhism, including public expression of reverence for the Dalai Lama, who advocates Tibetan autonomy. In the predominantly Muslim Xinjiang Autonomous Region of Northwest China, the government has tightened control
of religious activities in response to a separatist bombing campaign. A number of mosques have been closed or destroyed, unsanctioned religious classes have been canceled.

D. Europe and Central Asia

Human rights practice in Europe and Central Asia can be measured against such universally applicable documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and the Final Document of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights; as well as against such Europe and Central Asia-specific documents as the Final Act of the (Helsinki) Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the European Charter for the Protection of Regional and Minority Languages. The foregoing documents have each been adopted or ratified or signed by some or all of the fifty-two national governments in Europe and Central Asia. In general, these documents recognize five categories of human rights: civil rights, political rights, economic rights, social and cultural rights, and religious freedom.

When measured against the standards detailed in these agreements, forty-nine of the fifty-two nations of Europe and Central Asia fall naturally into four groups:

- Those two countries which at the end of the year 2000 were still egregious and particularly flagrant violators of human rights: Belarus and Turkmenistan. The governments of these two countries do not respect any of the five basic categories of human rights.

- Those seven countries that at the end of 2000 were seriously deficient in three or more areas of human rights but which were sometimes willing to overlook political, religious, cultural, or economic activities that did not absolutely threaten key values of their governments: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

- Those eight countries and one other political entity that, relatively speaking, were more or less functioning democracies at the end of 2000 but that were still seriously deficient in at least two areas of human rights: Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Kosovo (which is, in fact, self-governing even though the United Nations, like most European nations as well as the United States, officially regard it as part of Yugoslavia), Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

- Those thirty-one countries that respected the human rights of those within their borders as defined by the agreements cited above, even if there were, at times, racially motivated attacks against immigrants and others of non-European background and of Roma and/or occasional but significant failures by local authorities to protect the civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights of persons of non-European background and Roma: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

At this writing, some three months after the fall of the Milosevic government, in spite of official statements promising to respect the human rights of all, it is not yet clear what the actual behavior of the new Yugoslav government in regard to human rights will be. The Vatican City is sui generis as far as political entities are concerned and is not covered in this report.

Although this report is divided into five sections, each addressing one of the five categories of human rights recognized by the international agreements and treaties cited above, a somewhat more extensive treatment will be given to religious freedom.

1. Civil Rights

In general, the fifty-two nations of Europe and Central Asia have committed themselves to respect the civil rights of their citizens and others as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In terms of the civil rights defined in these treaties and agreements, the most prevalent patterns of civil rights violation concerned police beatings and torture in the course of interrogations, unwarranted arrests, and jailing of political opponents, beatings and attacks against Roma (also known as Gypsies) and efforts to evict Roma from certain neighborhoods and communities, failure to enforce arrest warrants issued by the War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and police abuse of gay men and lesbians and/or failure to protect gay people from anti-homosexual violence.

According to the testimony of local church leaders, physicians, international observers, and others who had an opportunity to observe, police in Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan continued in 2000 to use beatings and intimidation as a routine aid to interrogation during and immediately following arrests. Macedonian police attacked the residents of the ethnic-Albanian village of Aracinovo in Macedonia in retaliation for the murder of three Macedonian police officers by unknown perpetrators near that village. Also in Macedonia, two
Macedonian citizens of Albanian heritage died in police custody, one after having been severely beaten by police, the other under suspicious circumstances. Uniquely, and positively, a commission of the Turkish Parliament was able to write and publish a seven-part report detailing police abuse of persons in prisons and jails. That such a report was presented to the Turkish public is a good sign of the readiness of Turkish leaders to allow some change in their country’s police system. Police in Albania and Kosovo are presently receiving training and professional counseling from police peers in other European countries. This training and counseling might ultimately reduce the level of extralegal violence against arrested persons.

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch report that a number of leaders of the opposition parties in Belarus were “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” in 2000, including a former interior minister. Since “disappearing” presumably entails the death without trial or legal appeal of the person who is “disappeared,” it is a serious civil rights violation. In several European and Central Asian countries, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, opposition leaders were charged in 2000 with serious crimes that it is at least possible they did not commit. In Belarus, one opposition leader who had been charged with embezzlement was severely beaten while in prison. A former prime minister of Belarus, who had announced he would help organize an anti-dictatorship political event, was also arrested and forced to spend six months in prison. Shortly after his release for having confessed to various crimes that he may not have committed. In Belarus, one opposition leader who had been charged with embezzlement was severely beaten while in prison. A former prime minister of Belarus, who had announced he would help organize an anti-dictatorship political event, was also arrested and forced to spend six months in prison. Shortly after his release for having confessed to various crimes that he may not have committed. In Belarus, one opposition leader who had been charged with embezzlement was severely beaten while in prison. A former prime minister of Belarus, who had announced he would help organize an anti-dictatorship political event, was also arrested and forced to spend six months in prison. Shortly after his release for having confessed to various crimes that he may not have committed.

Police violence against Roma remained a serious problem in all central and southeast European counties. In the municipality of Vidin in Bulgaria, a sixteen-year-old boy was beaten and then burned in the police station after having lost consciousness. Also in Bulgaria, a nineteen-year-old Roma youth was shot as he was being arrested on suspicion of auto theft. A Roma couple was pulled over by police at a road block in Macedonia. The man was beaten and sentenced to eight days in jail for allegedly not having some necessary documents. A sixteen-year-old boy was arrested in Negotino in Macedonia, taken to the police station and beaten until he confessed to various crimes that he may not have committed. Six Roma men were arrested in Macedonia while gathering kindling in a forest, beaten, then taken to the local police station and beaten further.

Three police officers in Greece fired guns at a Roma man named Angelos Celal with the result that he died. The police officers were prosecuted for the murder, but a Salonica court found that the police had acted in self-defense even though Celal had no weapons and had been shot in the back. In New Kios in Greece, police raided Roma neighborhoods, beat two teenage boys, and then accused the boys and their family of stealing electricity and arrested them. Shortly after that, police in the same community burned another Roma house and shot a young Roma man.

Slovak police shot a thirteen-year-old Roma boy in the leg during a raid on a Roma settlement. Also in Slovakia, a skinhead attacked a twenty-one-year-old Roma man. The court later described the attacker as acting only out of youthful imprudence, a legal determination that prevented prosecution of the skinhead for a hate crime. A Roma man and woman were shot down by a Slovak citizen while they were walking with their son. The shooter was not arrested, although his identity was known. Instead, police visited the boy’s extended family and allegedly beat them. A fifty-year-old Roma woman was beaten to death in Slovakia by three male attackers who yelled anti-Roma racial slurs as they beat her, but the chief investigator saw no reason to say that the attack was racially motivated, even though the deputy prime minister said the crime was deplorable and the Slovak parliament observed a minute of silence on her behalf.

A number of Czech human rights groups reported that the number and ferocity of attacks against Roma in the Czech Republic increased despite the Czech national government’s efforts to counter discrimination in the Czech Republic. According to Czech human rights groups, many police and local authorities are still not investigating crimes against Roma and even when investigations are conducted leading to prosecutions and convictions, some courts continue to give lenient sentences to those who attack Roma. An American exchange teacher in the Czech Republic stepped in to defend a group of Roma who were being hassled by a Czech soldier, with the result that the soldier turned his attention to the American teacher and beat him. Ultimately a court found the soldier guilty of beating the American. They gave the Czech soldier only a two-year suspended sentence because the attack could not have been racially motivated since the American was himself not a Roma.

Five Roma houses were set fire in Stip, Macedonia. Houses belonging to Roma have been regularly burned in this town since 1992. Numerous homes belonging to Roma were demolished by the local government in the Athens, Greece, suburb of Aspropyrgos. The Greek government’s human rights ombudsperson tried to raise the issue with the local government, but his attempts were ignored. The council of Midea in Greece also voted to expel all Roma living in their community. The Greek community of Rio decided to remove all Roma from inside its city limits for “criminality, poor hygiene, and trespassing.” The city councils of Burgas and Mechka in
organized crime, raided the Kletko gay disco in Ukraine. Including members of a special task force against dispersed by police officers. Fifteen police officers, well-being of the gay community was interrupted and in Kishinev in Moldova to discuss issues affecting the police in other countries as well, but neither the victims Uzbekistan. It is possible that gay youth were beaten by Kazakhstan, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and beaten while under police custody in Belarus, which they were living.

In the Czech Republic, 75 percent of all Roma children are channeled into special schools for children with mental disabilities in spite of the fact that by usual developmental measures most of them are normal children. In Ostrava in the Czech Republic, the 5 percent of school children who are Roma constitute 50 percent of the special school population. The Czech Constitutional Court dismissed what in the United States would be called a class-action suit by Roma parents saying it lacked authority to rule on classes of discrimination and could only give judgments on a case-by-case, one-student-at-a-time basis, effectively denying equal access to education to Roma children.

Croatia is now cooperating fully with the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague, arresting and delivering indictees as ordered to the tribunal and allowing them to investigate inside Croatia’s borders. Yugoslavia, however, as well as the Serb and Croat portions of Bosnia, are withholding indicted persons from the War Crimes Tribunal. Slobodan Milosevic, the former president of Yugoslavia, Radovan Karadzic, the top ranking political leader of Bosnian Serbs during the war, and Ratko Mladic, the top ranking Bosnian Serb military leader during the war, are the most prominent of the twenty-six indictees still at large.

In 2000, people of African, Middle Eastern, and other non-European heritage frequently did not receive equal treatment under law in much of Europe. As in previous years, the majority of civil rights violations against people of color involved males of African heritage who were between fifteen and thirty years old and who could not speak the language of the country in which they were living.

There were reports in 2000 that gay youth were beaten while under police custody in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. It is possible that gay youth were beaten by police in other countries as well, but neither the victims nor the police chose to report the beatings.

A meeting sponsored by the local Soros Foundation in Kishinev in Moldova to discuss issues affecting the well-being of the gay community was interrupted and dispersed by police officers. Fifteen police officers, including members of a special task force against organized crime, raided the Kletko gay disco in Ukraine. Those caught in the disco were forced to stand facing the walls for some time while police searched some of the party-goers. Those at the disco were threatened with compulsory psychiatric examination. The next day police contacted the employers of some of those who had been at the disco.

Gay youths were harassed and frequently beaten by other youth as well as by adults in every western and central and eastern European country. The only countries in which there were no reports of beatings of gay youth were Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is possible that there were no beatings of gay youths in those countries. It is also possible that conditions are so repressive in those countries that either gay youth have kept their sexual orientation secret and, therefore, have not been beaten or that beatings of gay youth have happened but have not been reported by the victims.

2. Political Rights

Most of the fifty-two nations of Europe and Central Asia accept a number of international agreements and treaties that define the basic political rights of their citizens. Among these international agreements and treaties are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The political rights defined by these documents include the right of the people in a country to decide by a free and fair vote who will govern their country as well as the concomitant right to attempt to persuade others to vote for specific candidates or positions.

Municipal elections in Albania in October 2000 were flawed by inaccuracies in voter lists, invalid ballots, the intentional destruction of a ballot box in a Greek minority area of the coastal town of Himara, bias by the state-owned television station, beatings of journalists deemed as being pro-opposition, and an attack by unknown persons against four members of the leading opposition party. In spite of the best efforts of the international community to persuade the government of Azerbaijan to ensure the fairness of that country’s November 2000 parliamentary elections, those elections were badly conducted on the basis of a very biased elections law. The elections law required that parties seeking to participate in an election register themselves with the Central Election Commission. All the significant opposition parties were originally judged by the Central Election Commission to have failed to file valid registration forms, a ruling so preposterous that Azerbaijan’s president, Heydar Aliyev, had to ask the Central Election Commission to reverse it after receiving numerous protests from European governments, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the United Nations.
An independent weekly newspaper, the Monitor Weekly, was closed by the government of Azerbaijan during the run-up to the November elections after being charged with printing articles critical of President Aliyev, a crime in that country. Two independent daily papers, Uch Nokta and Avropa, as well as the independent television station ABA, were each closed during part of the election campaign and were assessed heavy fines by the government. The offices of the newspaper Yeni Musavat were torn apart in Azerbaijan as police searched for evidence of criminality on the part of the paper’s editor who happened to be an opposition candidate for Parliament. After police “found” a gun in the offices of the newspaper, the editor, Rauf Arifoglu, was arrested and held in jail through most of the election campaign. During the final weeks of the campaign, the Azerbaijan government power company turned off power to radio stations that tried to cover opposition candidates.

An ethnic-Macedonian political party was banned in Bulgaria on false charges of seeking to get a part of Bulgaria to secede from that country in order to join Macedonia. Severe penalties remain on the books in Romania for public criticism of state-owned businesses or government agencies. Journalists in Romania continued to be harassed by police. A reporter was beaten by the police after he tried to intervene with police on behalf of a colleague. The Albanian-language newspaper, Bota Slot, which has an edition that is printed and distributed in Macedonia, was subject to intermittent confiscation by Macedonian authorities.

After repeated attempts to persuade the government of Belarus to adopt a lengthy list of suggested reforms in that country’s election laws, the opposition parties in Belarus called for a boycott of the election. Calling for a boycott of an election is, however, illegal in Belarus and, as a result, one hundred members of opposition parties were arrested.

A member of the staff of the prime minister of the Bosnian Federation physically attacked a journalist of a daily paper in Bosnia that is critical of the prime minister. The information minister of the Serb portion of the Bosnian Federation demanded that a reporter be prosecuted for false reporting but was forced to resign after his government came under pressure from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The director of the state-owned electric company in the Serb portion of the Bosnian Federation beat and kicked Ljubisa Lazic, a female journalist, who was critical of the company.

3. Economic Rights

All of the fifty-two nations of Europe are signatories of at least one international agreement or treaty that defines basic economic rights. All European countries have accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (particularly Articles 4, 17, 23, and 24) and the Final Vienna World Conference on Human Rights document by consensus. Most have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Generally it is a basic human right to be able to work and, within reason, to choose which work one will do, to earn a fair wage from one’s work, to decide how and when one wants to spend one’s earnings, to save some of what one earns, to invest what one saves in order to produce future income, and to know that none of the foregoing rights will be compromised or abridged on the basis of race, ethnicity, creed, gender, or any other condition not related to one’s productive capacity.

Again in the year 2000, the worst violations of economic rights in Europe and Central Asia occurred in some of the former socialist nations. Collective bargaining still does not exist in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, or Yugoslavia. In 2000, the Belarus government arrested the editor and three coworkers of a paper published by an illegal union. Similar anti-independent trade union police actions took place in 2000 in Azerbaijan and Yugoslavia.

Women’s advocacy groups and local Helsinki Human Rights committees report serious discrepancies in pay between men and women in many parts of Europe. Indeed, according to reports of the above groups, there is not a systematic pattern of wage discrimination between men and women only in Estonia, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Even though few governments in the former Soviet Union compile economic statistics in enough detail to allow a statistically meaningful breakdown by gender, many observers have the impression that women in those countries sometimes have greater access to relatively higher-income and higher-status jobs than women in central and southern Europe.

Roma remained legally unprotected against discrimination in the job market in all European countries that are not members of the European Union except Norway.

Employment discrimination against gay people continued in most of Europe and the former Soviet Union during 2000. In Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Yugoslavia employees could be and often were dismissed when employers discovered they were gay. Outside the European Union, there is still no legal protection for gay people to ensure that their applications for employment will be evaluated on the basis of their job skills, experience, and training, and not on the basis of their sexual orientation.

4. Social and Cultural Rights
The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (in Europe) and the European Charter for the Protection of Regional and Minority Languages define social and cultural rights that must be accorded to members of minority ethnic and national groups. Specifically, these two groups guarantee the right of any person to conduct one’s daily life and business in one’s native language, insofar, of course, as the linguistic capabilities of those with whom one wishes to communicate will allow it. These two international agreements guarantee parents the right to instruct their children in whichever language they choose. Those nations that have signed the European Charter for the Protection of Regional and Minority Languages have further obligations to offer instruction in minority languages at public cost, to give financial support for regular radio and television programming in minority languages, and to conduct, when requested, official government business affecting members of linguistic minorities in their own language.

In 2000, government policies in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey were inimical to these rights. The fall of the Milosevic government in Yugoslavia gave hope that their social and cultural rights would be respected to Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, Romanian, German, Roma, Muslim Slav, and other minorities in Vojvodina and Sandzak.

Ethnic Albanian citizens of Macedonia remained unable in 2000 to secure a university level liberal arts education in their own language. The equivalent of a business college was opened by the Macedonian government for its ethnic Albanian citizens. However, Tetovo University, an Albanian language school founded by ethnic Albanian citizens of Macedonia, remains unaccredited and unrecognized by the Macedonian Department of Education.

Ethnic Kurdish citizens of Turkey were still forbidden in 2000 to use their native language in public settings or to organize themselves to ensure the preservation and transmission of Kurdish language and culture.

5. Religious Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights describes the basic religious rights to which most European and Central Asian nations subscribe. According to the Universal Declaration, it is a basic human right to hold whatever religious beliefs one chooses or to not hold any. It is also a basic human right, according to the same declaration, to join together with religiously like-minded people if one chooses, to change one’s beliefs, and, as a consequence, to leave one religious community and join another, or even to found a new religious community. Moreover, according to the same declaration, it is a basic human right to tell others about his or her religious beliefs, so far as they are willing to listen, or even try to get them to change their beliefs and join a different religious community.

In Russia, the implementation of the October 1997 law on religion by local authorities as well as by various federal offices continued in 2000 to be the focus of concern regarding religious freedom for members of Russian churches. The 1997 law required that religious groups be registered with appropriate regional and federal offices by December 31, 2000, or face “liquidation” by local authorities. However, in order to be registered, a religious group has to be able to meet a number of conditions as well as prove to the local government’s satisfaction that it has existed for at least fifteen years. The Russian federal government and a number of the thirty regions that have adopted local laws on religion have disagreed on what exactly a religious group must do to qualify for registration. As a result, the federal government might rule that a religious group should be registered, which a regional government might deem ineligible for registration. President Putin’s seeking to establish the supremacy of federal law over every area of regional government including the enforcement of local religion laws. If President Putin is successful, a number of unregistered religious organizations will be dissolved by court order in 2001. If President Putin is unsuccessful, it is likely that many more religious organizations will be dissolved in 2001.

The 1997 religion law also controls the allocation of visas to missionaries from other countries who wish to work in Russia. To get a visa, missionaries are supposed to work with a registered religious group. One problem some missionaries in Russia are facing at the beginning of 2001 is that the group with which the missionary is working has either been denied registration or has not yet applied for registration. Another problem is that sometimes a missionary will work with a specific ministry of a registered religious group, but the link between that ministry and the registered group will not be clear to state authorities. Either way, it is possible that the missionary will lose his or her visa. Up until this writing, relatively few missionaries have ultimately been deported from Russia or refused readmission to Russia because of visa problems. According to the United States Department of State, only four missionaries who are United States citizens were denied visas by Russia during 2000. However, given the December 31, 2000, deadline for registration of religious organizations, it could happen that a larger number of missionaries who are related to nonregistered organizations could be denied visas in 2001. Since all the mission workers appointed by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) work with registered religious groups, it is very unlikely any of them will face visa problems in 2001.

The government of President Putin accords privileges to certain religious groups it denies to others. Alexy II, the patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, meets regularly with President Putin and is consulted about many key
government decisions. On the other hand, offshoot Orthodox groups, such as Community of All Saints of the True Orthodox Church, which broke with the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in the early 1990s, have generally been denied legal registration. Baptists related to the Euro-Asiatic Federation of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists generally receive fair treatment at the hand of the government. Pentecostal and other nonregistered groups have difficulties renting property, employing pastors, opening Sunday schools, etc.

During 2000, President Putin attempted to force Chief Rabbi Adolf Shayevich to resign so that Berl Lazar, an American rabbi related to the Lubavitcher movement based in Brooklyn, New York, could take his place. The Russian-born Rabbi Shayevich was reportedly too closely allied with Vladimir Gusinsky, the president of the Russian Jewish Congress and owner of a media empire, who has been very critical of President Putin. When Rabbi Shayevich refused to resign, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia elected Rabbi Lazar as the Chief Rabbi of Russia, even though traditionally the Federation of Jewish Communities would not have had the authority to elect a chief rabbi. A few days later, the Russian Ministry of Culture signed an agreement with the Federation of Jewish Communities granting it the right to negotiate with the state on behalf of the Jewish community. Clearly such actions by the Russian government show that it is willing to risk violating the religious liberty of its citizens in order to gain whatever advantages it sees in giving preference to one group over another group.

Anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim prejudice remain a problem in Russia, as they do generally in eastern Europe. Anti-Semitic articles continue to appear in numerous local publications, as well as in some national publications. Jewish groups report that the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is attempting to use anti-Semitism as a tool to rebuild its popular support. The number and ferocity of anti-Semitic incidents appeared to decline, however, during 2000.

Anti-Muslim sentiment in 2000 was partly tied to the ongoing fighting in Chechnya. In at least one city, anti-Muslim mobs forced a local Muslim group to delay laying the cornerstone for a new Mosque.

Human Rights Watch reports that literally “thousands” of people are currently jailed in Uzbekistan for their religious beliefs. Most of those under arrest are fundamentalist Muslims who are not willing to submit to state regulation of their religious practices. Many of these Muslims are members of the Islamic organization Hizb ut-Tahrir. In some cases, close relatives of these Muslims were tortured by police in order to deter them from supporting their fundamentalist family members. The Uzbek government also organized a number of “hate rallies” in 2000 in which hundreds of neighbors were gathered to denounce fundamentalist Muslims as traitors. Uzbek police also apparently planted illegal drugs in the homes and on the persons of a number of fundamentalist Muslims. Observant Muslim female students continued to be expelled from schools and universities in Uzbekistan for wearing veils.

In 2000, as in past years, the Uzbek government also vigorously persecuted Protestant Christian believers and congregations. Police in the cities of Karshi and Tashkent raided Baptist congregations. In Karshi, the police arrested all present, including children. In Tashkent, police arrested ten men. Korean-led Protestant congregations in various cities in Uzbekistan were also visited by the police.

In 2000, the government of Turkmenistan actively suppressed all religious expression except Orthodox Christianity and Sunni Islam. These two groups are allowed to hold religious meetings, publish and distribute religious literature, and seek to win converts to their respective faiths. In turn, the state Council for Religious Affairs has the right to determine which Orthodox and Sunni Muslim clergy should be appointed to which posts, and which should be dismissed.

During 2000, Turkmen police interrupted worship services of non-Orthodox and non-Sunni believers, confiscated religious literature, tore down meeting places, and attempted to entrap foreigners into behavior that would justify their arrest or deportation. Turkmen members of non-registered religious groups were arrested on trumped-up or outdated charges, beaten in police custody, judged in trials from which neutral observers were excluded, and then sentenced to lengthy prison terms. During 2000, this treatment was meted out to clergy and prominent lay members of the Baptist, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Baha’i, Hare Krishna, and Seventh Day Adventist faiths.

In Tianeti in Georgia, police destroyed a Baptist church and arrested its pastor. A Jehovah’s Witness worship service was also interrupted and those present were sent home. Reporters seeking to attend a show trial against a Jehovah’s Witness leader were expelled from the trial, beaten, and then arrested.

In Bulgaria, Muslim clerics were expelled for violations of a 1948 law requiring that preachers be registered with the government.

Hungary’s tax laws were amended in 2000 in a way that was perceived as threatening by that country’s minority religious groups. In the new tax law, an exemption from the Hungarian value added tax is given only to Hungary’s six historic religions. Members of other religious groups believe that the failure to grant them this exemption is a bad sign about how the government might treat them in the future. Representatives of the Hungarian government said that they wanted to continue to give special tax treatment to traditional religious groups, but did not know how they
could distinguish in law between new and “benign” groups, like United Methodists and new and more “dangerous” groups like the Scientologists.

The mayor of Kasandra in Greece led a collection of civilians to a lot where a Jehovah’s Witnesses kingdom hall was being built to stop work on the building. In the process the civilians beat two journalists.

The mufti of Xanthi in Greece was convicted for illegally claiming a religious authority that Greek police did not believe properly belonged to him.

In the Serb portion of the Republic of Bosnia, the city of Banja Luka has still not complied with a June 1999 order of the Human Rights Chamber ordering it to issue permits for the reconstruction of seven mosques destroyed by Serbs during the war.

Catholics in Belarus were forbidden by the Belarus government to hold a procession in Kiev in honor of the feast day of Corpus Christi.

In spite of a commitment by the president of Azerbaijan that his country would move toward greater respect for religious liberty freedom, the Azeri government deported a German citizen who was serving as the pastor of a Lutheran congregation.

In 2000, most European countries continued to deny full legal recognition to certain “new” religions including the Unification Church, Scientology, and smaller local groups. Not receiving government recognition has made it difficult for them to seek legal redress when they have suffered some harm, whether in the workplace or in a school or elsewhere, as a result of the prejudice of others against their religion. Most European church leaders, including leaders in interfaith and ecumenical work, contend that Scientology and perhaps the Unification Church are merely spiritually fraudulent money-making operations run for the benefit of a few top leaders that financially and psychologically exploits its rank and file members. A few European church members and leaders say, however, that it is the right of all people to believe what they want, as well as to seek to win others to that belief, however strange it might seem to traditional religious believers, and that, therefore, the government should treat these groups just as it does more traditional Christian, Jewish, or Muslim groups.

E. South and Southeast Asia

Many countries in this part of the world are suffering due to the violation of human rights, essential to human freedom and dignity. The words of the prophet Micah need to be looked at repeatedly, “...do justice, ...love kindness, and ...walk humbly with our Lord” (Micah 6:8). Human rights to all kinds of freedom have universal values with a powerful message to transform the world for the better. What we see instead are powerful forces at work usurping justice, love, and humbleness.

Human rights appears to gain ever-wider attention in the region; yet actual conditions seem to have deteriorated in places like Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, East Timor, Myanmar, Thailand, Amnon, Aceh, North Moluccu, and Irian Jaya. In India, a republic firmly founded on the very principles of democracy, there have been increasing violations of human rights and religious freedom. In certain other countries, such as Myanmar, Vietnam, and Laos, human rights are scarcely even addressed.

Politicians, and sometimes religious leaders, who defend systems that constrict human rights while claiming full political freedom and religious liberty, argue that definitions of human rights are necessarily shaped by the ideologies and goals of different communities. Therefore, they argue, perspectives on human rights are properly conditioned by cultural and religious dynamics. Others assert that basic human rights must be nonnegotiable under whatever political regime or in any religious system.

In the Third World, a partial application of democracy is not to be mistaken for true and substantive democracy as a fundamental and comprehensive system of governance. Similarly, partial rights may simply be “an innovative guise for artful despotism.” Wholesale repression, as in Myanmar, may give way to selective or rotated repression, such as the arrest of a group of Islamists at one time and another group of left-wing extremists at a different time, both of which being among “the opposition.” Thus, the authorities could deflect and disqualify widespread reaction and still claim to be “democratic.” The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), which has replaced the former State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), continues to severely restrict the freedom of expression and to preempt any moves to convene a democratic parliament on the part of the properly elected National League for Democracy (NLD).

1. Civil and Political Rights

Thailand has agreed for the first time to allow the United Nations high commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) to have a permanent representation on the Thailand-Myanmar border. There are about 100,000 refugees there from Myanmar. The human rights’ report of the U.S. Department of State also states that an ingrained culture of corruption persists in many parts of the civilian bureaucracy and the security forces. Routine demands for bribes undermine the rule of law and permit a climate of impunity for various illegal activities, such as income tax evasion, gambling, trafficking, goods smuggling, and prostitution. The government’s efforts to close the gap between urban and rural living standards have largely been ineffective. The prostituting of women and children, which is perpetuated by cycles of poverty and despair in many rural communities in Thailand and
other parts of Asia, constitutes an ongoing menace. The church, while active in efforts to address these problems, is grateful for the historic role of the monarchy in protecting the rights of Christians to worship and service.

2. Social and Cultural Rights

Most Southern Asian countries have constitutional provisions for the equality of the sexes, protection of children, and nondiscrimination among ethnic or cultural groups. However, the practice widely varies on all of these fronts. In a number of countries, women have achieved important positions of leadership in society, including private business, academia, the professions, senior management, representation in parliament or national assembly, senior diplomatic posts, cabinet ministries, even the prime ministry (as in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan).

Domestic violence is a prevalent problem throughout the region; yet many of the victims do not seek help. As may be also universally true, abuse in the family is rarely discussed publicly. Privacy may be the value contributing to secrecy in traditional society; but fear may be a stronger factor. “Bride burning” is still heard of in places like India and Pakistan, while “honor killing” (of a female relative for her perceived lack of chastity) is common in many of the countries in this region, especially in rural societies. In most countries of the region, a number of active women’s rights groups are working to reform a variety of legal and social practices.

Children’s welfare is often the stated commitment of governments, though public provision for their welfare varies widely. Public education is provided in all countries within this region, and in some cases it is compulsory. Free immunization, as one component of health care, is increasingly offered by public health clinics and in schools. Some governments have enacted laws to assure increased protection of children and strict rules against children’s employment.

Although the commitment of southern Asian governments and many nongovernmental organizations to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM) was reinforced by supporting an edict by the minister of health about two years ago, the practice is quite common, especially among the illiterate and the tribal communities. In addition to the decree banning FGM, extensive efforts have been expended to offer community education concerning the health hazards of the often-clandestine procedure, and the long-term physical and psychological harm incurred by the practice.

Progress is being made, albeit very slowly and, again, to varying degrees, with regard to addressing the rights of disabled persons. A number of governments work closely with United Nations’ agencies and other international donor organizations to increase public awareness and to design job-training programs for the disabled. Television programming, the print media, and education in public schools are utilized to increase awareness of the needs, rights, potential, and value of the disabled.

3. The Rights of Religious Minorities

A variety of restrictions are imposed on religious minorities in south and southeast Asia. Not only do Christian minorities experience different forms of discrimination, harassment, and sometimes violence, such as the burning of churches, “disappearances,” and the looting of homes (as in a number of locations in India, and in the tragic situation witnessed throughout 1999 and in 2000 by Indonesians), but so also do Muslim minorities in India, and the minority Ahmadi sect in Pakistan. Although the constitution of India provides for freedom of religion, violence and intolerance are perpetrated against many religious groups in India, including Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians. The failure of the government of India to protect these religious groups has abridged their right to religious freedom. Extensive legal and societal discrimination, as well as violence, including female bondage, forced prostitution, and child labor, remains a serious human rights problem. During a recent eighteen-month period, Christians, in particular, have been attacked or killed in India by Hindu terrorists and have had their houses for worship destroyed. Human rights abuses are particularly evident in the occupied states of Jammu and Kashmir and several northeastern states in India.

Still the more accustomed forms of religious discrimination and/or restrictions exist. These include the complication and delay, if not the outright rejection, of building permits for churches; the confinement of acts of worship by minorities in designated places only; the habitual non or underrepresentation of the minority population in national assemblies; the omission (or the glossing-over) of minority community history in educational materials; and the requirement of conversion. (In the Muslim world, a Muslim man may marry a Christian woman without her being required to convert, though it is often insisted upon, while a non-Muslim man is required to convert to Islam if he decides to marry a Muslim woman).

4. A Special Note on Indonesia

The recent human rights situation in Indonesia is bewildering. It has seen the most disastrous, tragic, and horrendous year since the cruel killings of 1965–66. The collapse of the economy several years ago led to a total breakdown of trust in the government. The year 1998 saw the explosion of popular opposition to the Soeharto regime, almost continuous demonstrations by students, skyrocketing levels of poverty, vicious riots, and the resignation of Soeharto from the presidency he had held for thirty-two years. Soeharto’s protégé, the unpopular Vice-President Habibie, took over and tried to establish
legitimacy by instituting wide-ranging reforms. Many political prisoners were freed, the press was unshackled, and economic reforms (in keeping with International Monetary Fund (IMF) requirements), were instituted.

Habibie agreed to hold popular elections to form a new government in June 1999. During the year, government authority changed hands from President B.J. Habibie to new President Abdurrehman Wahid, and the political system was revamped. The judiciary, however, remained subordinate to the executive and still suffers from pervasive corruption. The government did announce its willingness to consider autonomy for East Timor, but the ballot was postponed three times. It was only after external intervention that East Timor achieved its independence. It remains a battered and dangerous place much in need of help. In large part, the leadership of the church was destroyed in the struggles before intervention.

In the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the most basic statement of human rights is that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person . . . . No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, home or correspondence . . . . Everyone has the right to protection of the law against such interference or attacks.” In Indonesia, the year 2000 was a dismal year for the enjoyment of those basic civil rights. People continued to be killed arbitrarily without protection of the law. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced, lost their homes, their security, and all they own. As of this writing, thousands of Indonesians still live in refugee camps in their own (or former) country, afraid that they will be killed if they return to their homes. There has been systematic replacement of populations in many areas where the Christian majority removed has now been replaced by a uniformly Muslim population. The year 2000 might be described as a year of living dangerously in Indonesia. There were repeated reports of forced conversions of Christians to Islam.

Punishing high level military officers in a situation as unstable as Indonesia is a tricky business, especially in a guerilla war where atrocities are claimed on both sides. Some observers suggest that President Wahid’s success or failure in the effort to neutralize Acehnese demands for a Timor-style referendum will determine the survival of his government and of the unitary state of Indonesia. Unlike East Timor and Irian Jaya, Aceh has a relatively weak claim to the right of political self-determination since it was an active, founding member in the formation of Indonesia as an independent sovereign state in 1945.

The impact of the greatest human rights tragedy in Indonesia during the year 2000 is still unfolding in Ambon and the surrounding spice islands of Moluccu. The causes of the tragedy and the solution are so complex and murky that outside authorities continue to loath to step in. Interethnic and interreligious fighting continues, though it is increasingly one-sided. Thousands of homes, numerous churches, some mosques, and government facilities were burned. Tens of thousands have fled from their homes. Repeated efforts to make peace have failed. The government continues to fail in its responsibilities to protect the rights of its citizens.

Many church leaders in Ambon view the conflict as a jihad on the part of Muslims, whose long-term goal is to annihilate the Christian stronghold in Ambon in preparation for the formation of a Muslim state. Many Christians feel abandoned by the Indonesian government and the outside world as they struggle to defend their homes and families with homemade weapons. Similar sentiments are also expressed by Muslims.

Many observers believe that the conflict is not primarily about religion, but rather stems from bitter rivalries for power stemming back to colonial times. Under the Dutch, the minority Christians were favored in the power structure and gained most positions of prestige, wealth, and power. Since independence, and especially since the forcible suppression of the “Republic of South Moluccu” (RMS) secessionist movement, Muslims have received preferential treatment by the government. Not only political rivalry, but also social, cultural, and economic differences fan the flames of conflict. In any case, in a civil war all of the basic human rights are sacrificed and unbiased truth is difficult to find. The government must stop the violence, restore public security, and reestablish the rule of law on an impartial basis in the Moluccan islands. It may also determine the survival of the Indonesian state.

5. A Special Note on India

India has a democratic constitution that upholds religious liberty and includes prohibitions not only against untouchability but also against discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, language, or place of birth. Nevertheless, there are two groups whose constitutionally guaranteed human rights have been in serious jeopardy. The first are the Dalits, or untouchables, whose human rights have been systematically denied for centuries and for whose protection and advancement the constitution made special provisions. The other are the Christians who have become more recent targets of violence and state-supported harassment. During 1999, Human Rights Watch published major reports first on the violence against Dalits and then on violence against Christians, while the U. S. Department of State reported extensively on the situation of the Christians.

The dominant castes have long used violence to keep Dalits subservient and in their lowly place. In the 1980s, there was a dramatic increase in the cases of reported anti-Dalit violence as Dalits began asserting their dignity and rights. This continued through the 1990s. The worst
cases have been in the state of Bihar where, on several occasions, private armies of landlords have slaughtered whole Dalit villages, and southern Tamil Nadu, where caste violence against Dalits, often with police collusion, has been endemic.

Anti-Christian violence is much more recent and may be dated to the rise to power in the central government of the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP (Indian People’s Party). During the first year in office of this Hindu party, which has both moderate and extremist wings, there were more incidents of anti-Christian violence than during the previous fifty years of India’s independence. This violence continues, although incidents have been less frequent. There is widely expressed resentment against conversion by Christian groups.

The constitution of India does guarantee Christians the right to propagate their faith, but Christian leaders in India consider the religious liberty of the Indian people to change their religion, if they so desire, to be the key issue at stake in this conflict. This emphasis is rightly placed because historically oppressed groups like the Dalits have used conversion, or the threat of conversion, as a powerful instrument in their struggles for dignity, equality, and justice. To deny them this instrument would be to make their struggle even more difficult than it already is. The government of India has generally depicted incidents of anti-Dalit and anti-Christian violence not as violations of human rights but as evidence of civil strife. For Dalits and Christians, the police, local administrators, and judges, as well as state and national governments, are not neutral guardians of law and public order but very much on the side of the perpetrators of violence.

Because the world is seldom fair, we need to pray for justice. Because the world is weary of wars, we need to pray for peace. Because the world is in despair, we need to pray for hope, and because the world will die without it, we need to pray for love.

F. The Middle East

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has had a positive engagement in many Middle Eastern lands for more than one and three-fourths centuries. Most notably through educational, health, and development programs that have been carried out in partnership with indigenous churches, organizations, and related institutions, the church has been a constant friend of the peoples of the region, and its contribution a sustained factor in the pursuit of the quest for just societies.

Out of deep, historic theological convictions that are rooted in the sovereignty of God, and through a deliberate commitment to partnership with others in their own situations who are called to live out a life of obedience to God, it bears witness to the fundamental values of the Christian gospel that the divine purpose of salvation and social justice, moral order, human liberty, and peace cannot be separated. And, while the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been bound by a conscious, self-imposed discipline never to interfere in internal matters of politics, governance, cultural, or social mores, it has encouraged and supported initiatives of various partners who engage in improving the quality of life for all people in their different societies. It has also accepted an implicit responsibility of informing its constituency, insofar as possible, of the realities about the conditions of the people, about whom it so deeply cares, and alongside whom it has stood for so long. Such responsibility also includes the obligation to challenge whatever policies of our own government that may have the effect of negating, in some cases, the God-given rights of entire populations to self-determination, self-sufficiency, well-being, and the pursuit of liberty and happiness for themselves and their future generations.

It is for these reasons that attention is paid to human rights principles and applications in this and other regions of the world; but here in particular, where the understanding of human rights is—generally speaking—focused rather on the well-being of the community than on the individual. Readers are reminded that there is a fundamental difference in concept from the West, and hence in applications. This seems to be a prevalent difference, at least in application, even when representatives of many of these countries participate in the formulation of international charters, agreements, protocols, declarations, conventions, and other covenants—some of which are now “third-generation” documents—that are ultimately signed by their governments.

It seems needless to state that there is generally no appreciable progress in the cause of human rights to be reported year after year in most countries of the Middle East; and there are several reasons for that. We have already made reference to some basic difference in perspective regarding human rights and their appropriation in the Middle East. Perhaps this in itself should be the subject of dialogue; and indeed dialogue is already taking place within and among, and/or initiated by, some of our partners, formally and informally, in the region. (Elsewhere in the work of the 213th General Assembly (2001), Presbyterians are invited to enter into discussion on this subject—that of international dialogue among cultures.)

Another significant reason is that as “globalization,” which is largely dependent on rapidly advancing technologies and the strong and sweeping waves of a market economy, is becoming an irreversible phenomenon, and perhaps the most characteristic dynamic of the age. Meanwhile, much of the third world is still dependent on community ties, including the traditions of the clan or the tribe, or on the patterns of
agrarian or semirural society. An obvious result is that while developed societies are becoming increasingly preoccupied with what “globalization” can achieve by way of greater prosperity, for them of course, a great many of the world’s peoples who are also—inevitably—caught in fast-turning wheels of globalization, are finding themselves left with a diminished share of the world’s resources. Neither they nor their governments are in a position to free themselves for a more abundant living. Often combined with internal struggles against an exclusive, single-party, authoritarian rule; deteriorated infrastructures; deeply historical cultural assumptions about gender or age or race or wealth; malignant corruption; myriad contradictory laws or ordinances; or fundamentalist religious activism; external forces of political and economic hegemony contribute to social disintegration and, subsequently, to human rights abuse.

That there is little progress in the record of human rights may be a charitable assessment, according to a noted analyst from the region who views human rights with reference to the modern Arab world in particular, as “alien to their culture.” He writes: “To think about ‘human rights’ is foreign to modern Arab culture; and to violate them is the norm in Arab societies.” He asserts that capacities for advocating and upholding ‘human rights’ are relatively weak because of a nonconducive political environment and a generally fragile human rights movement that is itself susceptible to abuse (Dr. Nadir Firjani, “On the Impediments to the Spread and Maintenance of Human Rights in the Arab Homeland,” in a collection of essays published by the Center for Legal and Information Studies of Human Rights, Cairo, n.d.). Other writers make similar documented assertions about non-Arab states of the Middle East, based on practical evidence on the ground. That such authors are free and able to publish his observations is itself a sign of increased openness in the realm of public expression that has come to be a common expectation in most places in the region. Free public expression, however, is only one of the human rights that may be normatively guaranteed, but not always assured and are, indeed, often violated.

As has been previously stated in this report, the human rights scene does not change dramatically from one year to the next in the Middle East, and in 2000 it was no great exception. There were some important events that occurred during the year whose effects have yet to unfold: e.g., the rise of King Abdallah II of Jordan to the throne following the death of his father, the late King Hussein; the death of Moroccos’s King Hassan II and Syria’s President Hafez Al-Assad, who were succeeded by their sons; the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from South Lebanon; the announced resignation of Israel’s Prime Minister Ehud Barak; and the call of the Knesset to an early election in 2001, and other events. Generally, though to varying degrees, many countries in the region continue to apply long-standing abuses. These include arbitrary arrests, disappearances, holding political prisoners (often for extended periods), unfair trials, judicial systems that are not totally free from corruption, restrictions or controls on public expression, assembly and the press, child labor, gender discrimination, etc.

In the following paragraphs, therefore, only certain new developments, including a few positive references, and some significant continuing practices requiring special attention or emphasis warrant highlighting in this update.

1. Civil and Political Rights

The withdrawal of Israeli forces from Southern Lebanon in 2000 without incidents came as welcome news not only in Lebanon but to the entire region, and was credited primarily to the persistent efforts of the Lebanese Hizbollah party, under the leadership of Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. Although there were fears about potential punishment by the Lebanese government or by Hizbollah activists for Lebanese Maronite militia who had, in the past, collaborated with the Israelis, and for others who were given employment privileges within northern Israel, none of those fears materialized. The withdrawal gave guarded hope for similar withdrawals from the Israeli occupied territories in the West Bank, and for an acceleration of the peace process that had looked forward to completion of final status negotiations by September 13, 2000.

Instead, a provocative “visit” took place on September 28, 2000, by Ariel Sharon, leader of Israel’s Likud Party and former defense minister, to the Islamic holy site of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aksa Mosques (called Al-Haram Al-Sharif, or “Noble Sanctuary;” and referred to as “the Temple Mount” by the Jews). This visit, by Sharon’s acknowledgment, was intended to challenge the Palestinians’ claim to sovereignty over their sacred site and East Jerusalem. It triggered a civilian uprising that began in the form of stone throwing at Israeli guards by Palestinian youth and evolved into a violent confrontation with the Israeli army. The confrontation spread throughout the West Bank and Gaza, and resembled an all-out war waged by the Israeli army against entire towns and villages, including Ramallah, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala, Bethlehem, and others. Besides home demolitions, armored artillery, land missiles, and helicopter bombings were employed. More than 330 Palestinians have been murdered, including many children who were shot in the head or upper bodies. Thousands of people were injured. A few Israeli soldiers lost their lives in action.

Since 1948, approximately four million Palestinians have lived as refugees outside Palestine. Although many of them have been resettled, others, living as aliens, do not have the same rights as citizens of the host countries
and are, in fact, living under conditions of extreme poverty. Those who live in the region, by and large, do not have the right to a nationality and, in some instances, are not permitted employment in certain professions or occupations.

Lebanon, for example, has listed seventy occupations that Palestinians are not allowed to hold. Part of the reason given by most host countries, in declaring their solidarity with the Palestinians, is they do not want to “let Israel off the hook” regarding the destiny of the refugees. In spite of continuing international pressure, especially in the light of UN Resolution 194 granting Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homeland, Israel has continued to deny them that right on the ground that it could not accommodate or sustain those numbers of the would-be returnees and their offspring as that would create a huge imbalance in the state’s population. This issue was the most complex obstacle in the peace negotiations resumed at the end of the administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Within Israel and the Occupied Territories, detention and torture have continued to be a human rights problem in 2000, especially its latter part. Despite the September 1999 decision by Israel’s High Court of Justice prohibiting the use of physical abuse of prisoners and detainees, security forces have abused and, in some cases, tortured Palestinians suspected of security offenses. According to the U.S. Department of State Human Rights Reports, the Israeli government contended that abusive practices, such as painful shackling in contorted positions, sleep deprivation for extended periods, and prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures, were “‘moderate physical pressure,’ and therefore permissible under the law.” The court “categorically rejected that contention, but left open the possibility that such practices might be acceptable if specifically authorized by new legislation.”

In tune with the Peace Process, though it was frustrated in Camp David in the summer of 2000, progress was being made toward the release of Palestinian prisoners and administrative detainees in Israel. Not unexpectedly, though, the rise of tensions during the last three months of the year put progress on hold.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, though the administration of justice remained “problematic,” many political prisoners who had been held in Syria, Egypt, the Palestinian self-ruled territories, Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait were released. In the latter, the government acted on its announcement to close its notorious Talha prison.

There were parliamentary elections in Egypt in the autumn of 2000. New parties were permitted to be registered, and numerous candidates ran in many districts. President Hosni Mubarak, who in 1999 overwhelmingly won party, organizational, and popular endorsement for a new term, ordered that elections to the People’s Assembly (i.e., parliament) would be honorable and closely supervised by the courts. Candidates were in fierce competition. There were numerous districts where elections had to be runoff, and the government had to turn the process of monitoring and adjudging elections to the courts. There was general satisfaction that the election supervision by the justice system would be done with integrity.

The arrest and the release of Professor Saad Eddin Ibrahim, an Egyptian American political scientist and human rights activist who directs a study and research center on the progress of civil society in Egypt and the region, was the subject of extensive reporting, and intense debate in the Egyptian press. It also raised the level of the public’s awareness of human rights issues. Among the charges leveled at him, in the press as in the courts, was the instigation of public criticism of the electoral process. He contended, as was reported also in press interviews, that as an academician, he had the duty to teach his students about methods of election monitoring, and that it was necessary for him to give them out practical assignments in the subject. It is reported that he later canceled that assignment.

In Iran, several newspapers, magazines, and journals were banned or closed down under pressure from the religious conservative clerics. The tension between these and Iran’s more progressive, reform-minded Mohammad Khatemi has occasionally stifled open debate; but the legal system could not relinquish its duty to apply due process.

In Lebanon, in Kuwait, and in Egypt there were cases of journalists being tried and imprisoned in some instances for convictions for criminal libel, while in others publishing interviews with persons accused of collaboration with Israel, or for publishing a joke deemed offensive. In parts of the region, governmental, semi-independent or private newspapers or magazines are indistinguishable. Professional journals, too, either look over their shoulders when publishing materials about controversial matters, lest they go against political, cultural, religious, or moral conventions.

E-mail communication and Internet access, with local language support or enablement, though spreading phenomenally in the Middle East, remains very limited or largely unavailable in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria, and Iraq.

2. Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

In 2000, Iraq entered its tenth year under the U.S.-led and UN-imposed economic sanctions. This is true despite an adjustment of allowances in the Oil-for-Food Program (under United Nations Resolution 1153 (February 1999) that permitted an increase in the annual sale of Iraqi oil
to $10.5 billion from the previous annual allowance of $4 billion under Resolution 986 [1995]). The effects of these sanctions were literally visible on the faces and general appearances of the Iraqi people in 2000. This writer made two trips to Iraq during the year 2000, humanitarian in nature and in cooperation with the PC(USA)’s church partners through the Middle East Council of Churches: once accompanying the Moderator of the 212th General Assembly (2000) and one of the associate directors of Worldwide Ministries Division; and the second time with a seven-person fact-finding delegation of the PC(USA).

During both visits, we were given reports and statistics by UN officials that reflect the deteriorating health, housing, educational, and employment conditions of the Iraqi people as the direct result of the sanctions. We saw literally hundreds of children in several communities whose growth is visibly stunted, whose teeth and other bone structures did not appear normal, to say nothing of infants or toddlers who were dying for lack of appropriate medicine, medical supplies, or basic nutritional substances. The reports of the numbers of children dying of leukemia that resulted from the effects of exposure to depleted uranium that was used in the war against Iraq were alarming. Kidney failures attributed to polluted waters of the rivers were widely experienced. Doctors repeatedly complained that hospitals they staff do not have essential supplies, like gloves, blood bags, needles, and the like. And, they hasten to mention that for the few lucky ones who may be able to piece together the nominal charges to be admitted, there are innumerable others who die at home or who are homeless because they do not have the means. We were also reminded that, before the Persian Gulf War and the sanctions, Iraq was not only a self-sufficient nation, but an affluent country.

Regardless of internal abuses of human rights that are reported mostly by opposition groups in exile and that could not be tabulated or verified as there are no known nongovernmental organizations monitoring human rights performance inside the country, the continuation of economic sanctions against the people of Iraq seems a most abhorrent abuse of human rights.

In Israel and Palestine, the effects on the Palestinian people of the period of the Second Intifadah and of the extreme military retaliations by the Israeli government, were nearly totally debilitating. The complete halt of tourism, especially in this millennial year for which so much preparations and investments had been made, has wiped out the majority of the essential source of livelihood for the Palestinians, as it has also affected Israel’s economy. Not only has this effect been felt in the latter part of the year 2000, but it is certain to damage severely the incomes of 2001, as travel agents have reported cancellation of projected visits by tour groups.

Closures of Gaza and the West Bank, and the strict sealing off of Jerusalem, including parts of the Old City, have idled Palestinian day workers, and have also prevented the gathering of olives at the height of the harvest season.

Whether in Iraq or in the Palestinian territories, women and children seem to bear the worst brunt of economic devastation. Socially, too, throughout the region (with some variation), women face systematic gender discrimination. That is the case especially in societies where personal status laws are based in religious dogma. For example, superior rights are generally given to men in terms of divorce, child custody, inheritance, and, in some cases, citizenship. Civil marriage is not provided for in Israeli law, and has continued to be the subject of fierce debate in Lebanon. Iran’s parliament passed a legislation in 1999 that makes it a public offense to advocate equality between women and men in family law, on the grounds that “such advocacy created division within the society” (Human Rights Watch, World Report 1999, “Middle East and North Africa,” p. 6). It was recently observed in Iran’s capital city, however, that some practices, formerly considered socially daring under the country’s tight religious code, are now changing. For example, more women are pushing back their head scarves, thus partially revealing the front of their colored hair; men and women—especially of a young adult age—are seen holding hands while strolling on Tehran’s tree-shaded boulevards; Chadors (outer coats) now come in a variety of styles, some of which are not quite ankle-length, and it seems acceptable that many women are wearing fashionable, open sandals that show their painted toenails.

In Saudi Arabia and many of the Persian Gulf states, though not legislated, institutionalized discrimination affects the freedom of movement and association and the right to equality, employment, and education (Ibid.).

3. Religious Rights

Though in most Middle Eastern countries religious minorities are often careful, deliberate, and, in many cases, cautious when they talk about their religious freedom, it is noteworthy that despite exaggerated negative images minorities enjoy unexpected privileges. In Iraq, for example, land or other gifts are granted to churches and licenses are issued for building Christian places of worship. During a visit to the Arabic Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Baghdad in 2000, members of the PC(USA) saw a magnificent electronic organ that was the gift of the present Iraq government. There are reports, too, of close surveillance of Shi’i groups in the south of Iraq who are either avowed or secret followers of certain Iranian clerics.

In Syria, religious tolerance is widely attested. In some instances, career opportunities may be affected, negatively or positively, by religious or ethnic affiliation, but that is often the manifestation of the particular employer’s bias. It is a matter of fact, for example, that
members of the Alawi sect, to which the Assad dynasty belongs, hold a predominant position in the security services and the military, “well out of proportion to their percentage of the population” (U.S. Department of State, Human Rights Reports for 1999, “Syria,” p. 14). Government policy, however, officially disavows sectarianism. And, it is worth noting that, despite its fierce political conflict with Israel, Syrian Jews enjoy the same liberties and opportunities as their Muslim and Christian neighbors.

In Israel, Orthodox Jewish religious authorities hold exclusive control over Jewish marriage, divorce, and burial. Other marriages or conversions to Judaism performed by conservatives or reform rabbis are not recognized by the Orthodox authorities. As a result, many Jews wishing to be married in secular or non-Orthodox religious ceremonies do so outside of Israel; and their marriages are recognized by the state.

In any year, there are numerous reports of incidents of harassment or vandalism filed by Evangelical Christian and other religious groups, usually suffered at the hands of ultra-orthodox groups (e.g., Yad L’achim and Lev L’achim). There are complaints that the police are slow in investigating such incidents, or that there were no arrests or indictment of the perpetrators. Also, it is a matter of record that “in civic areas where religion is a determining criterion, such as religious courts and centers of education, non-Jewish institutions routinely receive less state support than their Jewish counterparts;” and a number of Christian organizations with representation in Israel exist “by a collection of ad hoc arrangements with various government agencies,” (Op. Cit., “Israel and the Occupied Territories,” p. 15) or go simply unregistered.

Under the Palestinian Authority, religious tolerance is the declared operating principle. However, in the face of increasing Islamic fervor, Palestinian Christian leaders sometimes appear to go an extra distance to assert their rootedness in the land, and their undivided solidarity with their Muslim neighbors. Together with the majority moderate Muslims, they express concern and apprehension of the rise of religious militancy, of both extremist Muslims and ultraorthodox Jews.

Lebanon continues to rebuild after a seventeen-year civil war that was defined in religious terms. On the outside appearance, the country projects a harmonious solidarity; but residues of religious strife linger in the memory and the psyche of many Lebanese. To continue the process of healing, the Middle East Council of Churches has organized, resourced, and financed an official Christian-Muslim Working Group that has become a nationally recognized committee in Lebanon, and, for addressing interfaith concerns outside Lebanon, the council has expanded its membership to be truly representative of the region. It looks to the day when it will be politically possible, with a just peace, to include Jewish members so that it can, through interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation, address the hurts of alienation caused by wars, occupation, displacement, and other tragic elements of the region’s chronic conflict.

G. Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean

1. Civil Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December of 1948, is based on the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.” This is the “foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” All countries fall short of recognizing the human rights of all citizens and many fall short egregiously. What has been emphasized in the last few years is that human rights abuses have far-reaching ramifications. The abuses in one country affect those in others. General Pinochet could not contain the abuses that took place in Chile to Chile. A court order for his arrest took place while he was in England. An attempt to extradite him to Spain to stand trial for abuses pertaining to Spanish citizens was not successful but the repercussions of the intent have continued and have made government and military officials throughout the world wary of moving outside their borders. There are now petitions in Spain against eight Guatemalan government officials for their roles in the massacres that took place in the 1980s.

The latest of the Central American Peace Accords that stopped civil wars in the area was signed in December 1996 in Guatemala. Conflicts, however, continue as this region responds to the consequences with regard to those who inflicted the abuses, and searches for a way to move forward so that healing can take place and peoples’ rights are assured in the present and future.

Honduras, a country intimately involved in the Central American conflicts but free from a declared civil war, was ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States in 1986 to compensate the families of victims of human rights abuses by the Honduran military/police in the 1980s. In the year 2000, the existing government began the process of paying $1.6 million dollars to 16 of the 184 victims. In addition to the fines imposed by the court, charges are pending against twenty-nine soldiers and army officers.

Guatemalan human rights groups are exhuming the remains of citizens who were massacred by the military in the 1980s and buried in mass graves. The remains bring closure to family members who did not know exactly where their loved ones were before and evidence to initiate charges against those who were responsible for such abuses. These initiatives, however, may bring threats and intimidation toward those who are pressing the charges and to lawyers and judges who work with the cases. Furthermore, the Guatemalan government has not
made efforts to ensure that these legal proceedings can occur without threats of intimidations and violence. Human rights workers are also experiencing death threats, physical assaults, and stalkings.

Guatemala is not the only country in which basic rights are not protected by security agents. Civilian police systems were organized and trained as part of the peace accords in order to get rid of the corruption and impunity that military units enjoyed. In El Salvador, twenty-four kidappings were reported during the first five months of the year 2000. Police officers were accused of muggings, stealing cars, participating in bank robberies, and kidnappings. The lack of personal security in El Salvador is of such concern that the archbishop of San Salvador called for a “cleansing” of the civil police organization. Christians in the same country gathered for prayer vigils to address the corruption and lack of security. Guatemalans have taken to vigilante justice as communities capture, sentence, and hang assumed criminal elements.

In Mexico, the seventy-one-year rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was fraught with political abuse, corruption and impunity. In December 2000, Vicente Fox, the representative of the National Action Party (PAN) was elected president. He has established a security secretariat to concentrate on the police forces, and an anticorruption czar to weed out larceny in public agencies and develop a transparency committee. These are lofty aspirations and time will tell if such initiatives will bring a more just and open society.

Unrest in civil society in Jamaica is observed though a sharp rise in violent crimes. Jamaican citizens are calling for significant changes in law enforcement. There is concern also regarding the number of civilians who have been killed by the police from 1999–2000. There are accusations that the police are placing knives and guns on innocent victims who have been shot.

In January 2001, it was reported that a high-profile case in Nicaragua involves a U.S. citizen. The president of Nicaragua is seeking to deport a U.S. lay nurse, Dorothy Grenada, who has worked for ten years in a remote village of Mulukuku in the only clinic in the village, which now has been shut down. Nurse Grenada has been accused of performing abortions at the clinic and giving attention to only that part of the citizenry supporting the Sandinista cause. Heavily armed police units enter houses in the early hours of the morning searching for her with the intent of deporting her without due process of law. Nicaraguan human rights groups, as well as the immigration offices, support her. This situation exposes the heavy-handed tactics the Aleman government has used throughout his presidency, which has left the Nicaraguan people concerned about the government’s failure to work under the rule of law.

Several factors are at play in the region causing the unrest. The drug trade and lack of traditional labor opportunities have skewed the economic situation. Finding work in the drug world brings unusually high pay and conflictive relationships. Traditional labor pays poorly and there are not enough jobs for the labor market. The countries moving into 2001 are still trying to come to terms with and address the impunity of military abuses of the citizenry that occurred in the violent 1980s. As non-U.S. citizens leave U.S. jails, they are deported to their countries of origin. However, many of these people are unable to fend for themselves in their own homeland because they left when they were young children and do not understand many aspects of this culture. Many of them had been serving sentences in U.S. jails on drug charges and gang participation.

2. Political Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts for all citizens the right to participate in the government of his or her country directly or indirectly through freely chosen representatives so that the will of the people is the basis for the authority of the government. In 2000, presidential elections took place in Haiti and Mexico. The newly elected Haitian president, former President Jean-Bertrande Aristide, was deposed of in 1991 through a coup. The international community hailed Aristide at that time as the first freely elected president in Haitian history. A Haitian court, during the year 2000, found thirty-seven former military and paramilitary leaders guilty of crimes committed during the country’s dictatorship that commenced with the ousting of Aristide in 1991. In the November 2000 election, former President Jean-Bertrande Aristide was reelected to the presidency with approximately 92 percent of the votes. Opposition parties boycotted the balloting because of a fraudulent voting process in the May 2000 Senate races. After the election, the UN’s Haiti Mission that focused on training police, monitoring human rights and elections closed because of underfunding, and an inability to function in the climate of political turmoil that exists in the region.

The Mexican presidential race process was declared fraud-free on election day. The new president, Vicente Fox, will need to address the disenfranchised Zapatistas in Chiapas who rose up in protest in 1994 because of, among other issues, their understanding of fraudulent presidential elections.

Mayoral elections took place in Nicaragua in November 2000. They appeared to be transparent but blemished by the decision of the Supreme Electoral Council to exclude Yatama, an indigenous organization on the Atlantic coast, from participating. Yatama did not present its candidates by the required deadline. The Yatama militants took to the streets in protest. On election day there was relative quiet, however, Yatama followers boycotted the election.
3. Economic Rights

Everyone’s right to employment with just and favorable conditions is a dream and not a reality for many Central Americans. Losses due to Hurricane Mitch in the year 1998 and general scarcity of jobs brings the number of people in Nicaragua living in poverty to a high 50 percent. Massive immigration to Costa Rica to seek employment has resulted in about $240 million dollars a year going back to Nicaragua. Forty percent of the El Salvadoran population is unemployed or underemployed and 49.7 percent live in poverty. In an attempt to create forty to fifty thousand jobs, the El Salvadoran government is developing the infrastructure to receive transnational clothing manufacturer “maquiladoras.”

According to labor leaders, the agricultural sectors in the region must be developed. The international market is not favorable to two biggest export crops in the region—bananas and coffee—at this time. Consequently there has been a decline in production and need for a labor force. In Costa Rica, agriculture production declined by 8 percent in the year 2000. This not only affects the Costa Rican agricultural workers but also those Nicaraguans who go to Costa Rica to work in this region.

Guatemala ranks last in human development among all Central American countries. Eighty-five percent of Guatemalans live in poverty. Sixty percent are illiterate and 46.6 percent are unemployed. Guatemala has an export-oriented economy that has to date been unable to incorporate enough of the workforce in the country to attack these statistics. People working in “maquiladoras” receive around $2.50 a day. Some 80,000 Guatemalans work in the maquilas, but with this salary are not much better off than those who have no employment. Guatemalans who journeyed north to the U.S. to look for a better prospect of employment sent, during the first half of the year 2000, approximately $600 million dollars back to family members in Guatemala.

Everyone has the right to form and join trade labor unions. The labor movement in the region there is under attack. People are still fired when managers discover that they are union members and others are killed. Human rights organizations have found ways to confront international companies so that in several cases such groups are able to negotiate with workers.

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state and everyone has the right to a nationality. Haitian laborers in the Dominican Republic (D.R.) would love to demand these rights. About 500,000 undocumented Haitian workers live in the D.R. They were recruited to work in the sugar cane fields. However, in the D.R., children born of Haitian workers often do not have birth certificates because their parents cannot afford to buy these documents. A trip to the capital of the country can lead to jail and deportation if caught.

Ecological effects of economic progress are witnessed by the scarcity of water in general and the number rivers that are becoming more and more polluted. Central America must find a solution to the water control challenge. According to a report by Paul Jeffrey, Methodist journalist based in Central America, fifteen million of Central America’s people have no access to potable water. More than two-thirds of the region’s rivers are heavily contaminated by agricultural chemicals, coffee-processing waste, untreated sewage, and unregulated mining operations. If this process continues, access to water will be a major human rights crisis in the future.

4. Social and Cultural Rights

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration of Human Rights without distinction of any kind, such as “race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or status.” Indigenous groups throughout Central America would like to think that this is so but find their life experiences to be different. Lands claimed by indigenous peoples are being offered by governments to foreign investors, encroached upon by fellow citizens and used for national projects such as electricity-producing dams. This is all taking place without any conversation with or protection for the indigenous owners. The indigenous are organizing in order to present a united front before the governments with demonstrations in the streets as well as face-to-face conversations with government officials.

Guatemalan indigenous families who returned to their homeland after the thirty-six-year civil war with expectations of building a new life, are now returning to Mexico where they lived in exile. The Guatemalan government has failed to provide housing and assistance for resettlement that was promised in the Peace Accords of 1996, and land ownership disputes have not been resolved.

The most prominent indigenous situation in the region remains that of the Zapatista confrontation with the Mexican government. This confrontation began in January of 1994 as a protest against fraudulent elections and the lack of interest and consideration by the Mexican government toward indigenous concerns and needs. An indigenous rights accord was talked about in 1996, but has not been established by the government. With the inauguration of Vicente Fox as president of Mexico in December 2000, and the election of Pablo Salazar as governor in the State of Chiapas, attempts have been made to alleviate the situation. There is much to be done still to bring official peace to the State of Chiapas. Even with official cessation of hostilities, Chiapenecans may still face the same challenges their brothers and sisters in other Central American countries encounter as they work
toward reconciliation of the abuses that were inflicted during the years of confrontation.

A November 14, 2000, Gallup poll showed that Latin American men and women believe that “women leaders are more capable than men in dealing with problems of poverty, corruption, education, the economy, and environmental protection in society.” Some countries have enacted laws requiring that a certain percentage of electoral candidates be women. The Women’s Political Platform in Trinidad and Tobago has a goal of a same gender ratio among the candidates as in the general population. This has not yet been reached, but the group is working in unison to reach this goal.

Women are taking an assertive posture toward being included in decision-making responsibilities in the region. At the same time, abuses remain even when laws are established to protect women’s rights. Statistics of legal firings in Costa Rica of pregnant women show that the number is increasing. The good part of this is that Costa Rica has a way to track what is happening and will be able to confront the problem.

In 1955, Mexican women won the right to vote and they now compose 56 percent of the electorate. Although illiteracy rates are high among women, studies show that 55 percent of the student body at the National Autonomous University of Mexico are women.

Women still experience gender exploitation. Not only do women go to foreign countries to be sex workers, but the business thrives in the region also. The Dominican Republic is ranked fourth among the nations of the world in terms of the number of women exploited in overseas sex trade.

Not only women but children, both boys and girls, are involved in prostitution. Socioeconomic factors are considered one of the main reasons for this phenomenon. Costa Rica has gained a reputation internationally for having groups that are in the business of sexual exploitation. Persons learn of the availability of such opportunities through the mass media. Concerned religious organizations as well as the Costa Rica government are working to change this situation. Signs in the San Jose international airport state that Costa Rica does not welcome tourists coming into the country to sexually exploit its citizens.

5. Religious Rights

Proposals have been presented to the new Mexican president, Vicente Fox, suggesting that the government recognize religious freedom as a fundamental human right and not as a concession of the state. As part of the policy of the government since the triumph of the Mexican Revolution, religious organization are treated as corporations. In the year 1992, the government allowed denominations to be religious associations. The government related to these religious associations through the Subsecretary for Religious Affairs. President Fox plans to create a national council that will operate as an independent organization separate from the central government. In an October 15, 2000, document, Fox explained the need to recognize the value and contribution of religion to the nation and the need to have a council decentralized from the central government. He also declared that the government will respect the right of people to change their religious affiliations, or not to profess any religion without discrimination.

Political changes in the nation have had an effect on the traditionalist/Evangelical and Roman Catholic tension in San Juan Chamula. Traditionalists over the years have confronted citizens of the indigenous community who chose another religious persuasion. Such persons were harassed, thrown out of the community, and, at times, killed. Traditionalists were not only the “religious leaders” but also the governmental leaders of the community and were completely loyal to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Because the country has opened up by electing a National Action Party (PAN) president, and governors, and mayors from different political parties, the power of the traditionalist leadership has eroded. Opportunity for religious choice is beginning.

H. South America

“In Latin America no one has been persecuted for declaring to being Christian, but for confessing with their lives the significance of being Christian” (Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights, MEDH, Argentina).

1. Civil Rights

Almost every country in South America was ruled by a military dictatorship for all or part of the period from 1964 to 1985. During that period, tens of thousands of civilians were murdered and disappeared by the military and police charged with protecting them. The dispute over what happened during that time continues. And the legal battle over who was responsible—and whether they will be held accountable for their actions—also continues.

The most public dispute concerned whether former Chilean dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, would be held accountable for crimes. More than sixty criminal cases are pending against him, all filed since 1998 by relatives of the victims, political parties, and trade unions. Pinochet’s parliamentary immunity was revoked in March 2000 and Supreme Court processes are still underway.

Another positive sign on this continent in 2000 was in Argentina. In this region, nine officials were placed under house arrest for their alleged involvement in the kidnapping of 200 children during the “Dirty War” of 1976 to 1983. The children were kidnapped at the same time as their parents, but instead of being “disappeared” like their parents they were given to military families to be raised.
The South America country where concern for human rights is most acute is Colombia, where tens of thousands are displaced yearly through a deliberate strategy of the paramilitary groups to empty the countryside of its population in areas of guerrilla control. This strategy appears to have the tacit consent of the government, which responds weakly or not at all. Even massacres by paramilitary groups draw little reaction from the government, leading the public to question the government’s will to stop them.

All parties to the conflict—armed forces, paramilitaries, and guerrillas—commit violations of the laws of war with seeming impunity. What merits deepest concern is the evidence that the paramilitaries enjoy the tacit and sometimes explicit support of the military.

Throughout the continent, conditions of detention were inhumane, particularly in Venezuela and Brazil. Prison populations were overcrowded and prisoners were routinely beaten, harassed, and murdered. In many cases, the overcrowding was not caused by an influx of convicted criminals but of people detained while waiting to be tried.

Abuses by security forces and impunity for those abuses occurred in practically every country in South America. No government was energetic in finding adequate responses to the human rights abuses. Torture, abuse, and lack of access to legal counsel were common events in most countries.

Freedom of the press was a concern, especially in Chile and Peru.

a. **Argentina**

The main struggle regarding human rights in Argentina is whether the families of the victims of severe repression by the military dictatorship (1976 to 1983) will learn the truth about what happened to their loved ones. In a case not covered by the amnesty laws, a federal judge is investigating the kidnapping of babies during military rule. The case concerned the practice of the security forces taking the young children of couples who were “disappeared” during the “dirty war” of the dictatorship. It is alleged that more than 200 children were taken from their parents (who were subsequently murdered by the regime) and given to families not considered “subversive.”

The newly elected government of President Fernando de la Rúa responded favorably to the request by European courts that two former members of the Argentinian armed forces be extradited on charges that they committed human rights abuses during the period of the dictatorship. That the new administration did not obstruct the case is a hopeful signal.

Argentina has also requested the extradition of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet for the assassination of General Carlos Prat and his wife, who were killed by a car bomb in Buenos Aires on September 30, 1974. Other Chileans involved in the case were also included in the extradition request, including the former chief of Chile’s secret police, Manuel Contreras Sepulveda.

Not all of Argentina’s issues and problems, however, lie in the past. Death threats and harassment continued against human rights workers. There were reports that citizens detained in police stations were tortured and that police murdered suspects in detention. That authorities failed to investigate these allegations caused concern among human rights advocates.

Two newspapers published in the provinces—and journalists working for those newspapers—have been threatened for their criticism of provincial governments.

b. **Bolivia**

Although respect for human rights in Bolivia was more evident than in neighboring Peru or Colombia in the year 2000, there are still concerns. For example, human rights advocates were threatened in the course of their work throughout the country and were detained and harassed by government security forces. Coca-leaf growers and peasants in the El Chapare region complained that their homes and crops were burned and personal possessions confiscated without due process. The demands of nongovernmental organizations that the incidents be investigated were either ignored or investigations were unduly delayed.

At least fourteen students were beaten by police after they were arrested while protesting the government’s proposal to reform education. Journalists covering the protest were also reported to have been beaten by police and attacked by police dogs.

c. **Brazil**

The year 2000 saw no improvement of the serious human rights violations in Brazil. There were numerous documented cases of killings and torture by security forces. This occurred in police stations, adult prisons, and juvenile detention centers. The conditions of detention for common prisoners, including juvenile offenders, is degrading and falls well below international standards. Death squads continued to operate with impunity, killing and threatening civilians.

The year 2000 was the year that Brazil meant to “celebrate” the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the first Portuguese explorers. In the northeast state of Bahia, indigenous peoples organized a march to protest the celebrations and gathered 2,000 leaders and activists from around the country. Police chose to block the
d. Chile

Ten years after the end of Chile’s seventeen-year military dictatorship, Chilean democracy is consolidated, and the country observes international norms of human rights. The 2000 election was the first closely contested presidential election since the end of the dictatorship. Neither the Socialist candidate, Ricardo Lagos, nor the rightist candidate, Joaquin Lavín, won an absolute majority in the first round. In the second round, Lagos won a narrow victory. Nevertheless, both the election and the transmission of power to Lagos took place with absolute normalcy, demonstrating the deep commitment to democracy of both the political left and right.

While the years between 1990 and 1995 were marked by the courts’ studied ignorance of prior human rights violations, the past several years have brought an increasing measure of justice. In 2000, following the former dictator Augusto Pinochet’s return to Chile after eighteen months detention in Britain on charges brought by Spain, the Chilean Supreme Court revoked the parliamentary immunity that Pinochet enjoyed under Chilean law, thus clearing the way for his prosecution on numerous outstanding charges, including homicide. Pinochet’s attorneys are now arguing that the cases should not proceed on the grounds of Pinochet’s age and poor health. Several other military officers are in the process of trial or have been convicted and imprisoned on similar charges.

e. Colombia

There is no country in South America where concern over the situation of human rights is greater than in Colombia. In the year 2000, the war escalated and so did the violations of human rights, and the involvement of the U.S. in the region.

More than 3,500 people were victims of politically motivated violence, and an estimated 250,000 people were forced to flee their homes. This raises the number of people displaced by war in Colombia to almost 2 million. Colombia continues to be the country in the world where kidnapping for political reasons is highest. At least 1,000 people were kidnapped and held for ransom during the year 2000 by armed opposition groups and paramilitary organizations.

The targets of the political violence continued to be civilians, especially community leaders, church workers, trade unionists, political and social activists, academics, human rights defenders, judicial officials, and journalists.

The situation of human rights deteriorated in every area. Torture was widespread. Children suffered serious human rights violations, mostly as the result of the armed conflict. Death squad-style killings continued in urban areas. International human rights organizations uncovered evidence documenting the collaboration between the armed forces and (illegal) paramilitary groups. Troops attacked indiscriminately and killed civilians, among them six elementary school children on a field trip near Pueblo Rico, Antioquia, on August 15, 2000.

Paramilitary groups working in some areas with the open support of the armed forces massacred civilians and
spread terror. Some judicial investigations were allowed to make process, but impunity for those who committed human rights abuses continued to be the norm. A bill meant to bring national legislation into line with international standards was vetoed by the government.

All of these developments would in themselves be cause for serious concern, but with the commitment of U.S. $1.3 billion in aid for the Colombian government, this concern must certainly be more deeply felt by citizens of the U.S. The U.S. aid is a contribution to “Plan Colombia,” promoted by Columbia’s President Andres Pastrana. There is much skepticism about “Plan Colombia.”

The Presbyterian Church of Colombia (Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia, or IPC), believes that “Plan Colombia” will not solve the problem of drug commerce and traffic because it does not address the huge quantity of capital that promotes it. Nor will Plan Colombia solve the grave social problems linked to urban and rural poverty, the exodus from the rural areas, unemployment, and the abandonment of the rural areas. Plan Colombia will worsen the conflict, broadening it and creating new displaced people, violations of human rights and international rights, with use of new arms and chemicals that affect health and environment. Five IPC pastors have been threatened and one assassinated in recent years.

Although former President Bill Clinton’s administration placed seven rigorous human rights conditions on the aid package—including the need for the Colombian armed forces to demonstrate a break with the paramilitaries—Colombia has met only one of the conditions, which requires that civilians, not members of the armed forces, have jurisdiction over crimes against humanity committed by soldiers. President Clinton waived the other conditions on national security grounds, which communicated to the Colombian government that the U.S. was more interested in strategic and economic interests than the human rights of the Colombian population. The Colombian conflict has been the motor of regional instability, as the conflict has crossed borders repeatedly into Brazil, Venezuela, and Panama.


Paramilitaries were responsible for 78 percent of the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, according to the Colombian Commission of Jurists (Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, CCJ), a human rights group. Guerrillas were credited with 20 percent. State security forces were linked to 2 percent.

For its part, the principal armed opposition group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) did not show serious interest in participating in the peace process and suspended talks repeatedly. It continued to violate the laws of war. In the area ceded to it by the government, the FARC carried out extrajudicial executions of at least eleven civilians.

f. Venezuela

The new constitution of Venezuela, introduced in December of 1999, contains forty-one articles protecting human rights. In themselves, however, these were not enough to concretely address human rights problems, which continue to be dire. More than 500 criminal suspects were executed extrajudicially. Others were tortured and ill-treated in overcrowded prisons.

Severe floods hit Venezuela in December 1999 causing the death of at least 20,000 people. In the aftermath of the flooding, the armed forces were responsible for execution-style killing of suspected looters.

The government of Hugo Chávez Frías has not been able to improve the worst of Venezuela’s human rights abuses despite rhetoric to the contrary. Chávez has so far responded to criticism from the press by counterattacking. Consequently, freedom of expression has become a major concern in Venezuela for the first time in recent years.

The Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) complained in March 2000 about a “climate of hostility toward the press” and expressed concern about an article in the new constitution that establishes the “right” to “timely, truthful, and impartial information.” The IAPA worries that should the government become the judge of what is “truthful” and “impartial,” then freedom of the press could become a memory in Venezuela. A related concern about inhibitions of the freedom of expression are the current defamation laws used by the wealthy and powerful to prevent journalists from criticizing them.

Over the previous years, about 3,700 Colombians have sought asylum in Venezuela from the political violence in their homeland. In the year 2000, Venezuela sent them back without ever granting them access to full and fair asylum procedures.

2. Political Rights

Peru

The year 2000 was a year of political upheaval in Peru. Peru’s president since 1990, Alberto Fujimori, decided to run for an unprecedented third term, an apparent violation of the Constitution of Peru. The first round of elections occurred with what most international observers agreed were serious amounts of electoral fraud. When the regime refused to grant internationally requested guarantees of fairness for the second round, the opposition candidate withdrew. Fujimori’s inauguration for the third term resulted in serious rioting both in Lima and the provinces.

Several weeks after the inauguration, opposition members of Congress made public a videotape of Fujimori’s intelligence chief and closest advisor,
Vladimiro Montesinos, giving a $15,000 bribe to an opposition congressman to switch his allegiance to Fujimori’s party. The resulting scandal forced Fujimori to fire Montesinos, dissolve the National Intelligence Service, and promise new elections to take place in April 2001, in which Fujimori promised not to run. Montesinos fled to Panama seeking political asylum. Montesinos loyalists in the military tried to negotiate an amnesty law to shield them from prosecution for human rights abuses during Fujimori’s regime. When these demands were not granted, Montesinos returned to Peru in a rumored attempt to incite a military coup. After several days of high tension and intense negotiation between Fujimori and the military high command, the military’s loyalty was assured, and Montesinos again fled the country. In early November 2000, the Swiss announced they had frozen $48 million in Montesinos’ accounts in that country, which were the likely profits from corruption and drug running. Other accounts were discovered in New York, Uruguay, and the Cayman Islands.

Fujimori, who was in an international conference in Brunei, chose not to return to Peru, instead going to his ancestral home in Japan. He faxed his resignation as president to the Peruvian Congress from Tokyo. The president of the Peruvian Congress assumed a transitional presidency of the Republic, which will be in place up to the new elections in 2001.

Many of Fujimori’s political problems were the result of the human rights abuses committed during President Montesinos’ regime. While he successfully overcame several violent guerrilla groups that had the country close to civil war, he also compiled one of the worst human rights records in the Americas, and even withdrew Peru from the Inter American Court of Human Rights. In addition, he centralized virtually all of Peru’s state power in his own hands, dissolving Congress in the early 1990s and ruling with dictatorial powers. These factors, combined with Peru’s poor economy, resulted in broad opposition to him in the population, leading to his downfall.

3. Economic Rights

In most South American countries, workers earning the minimum wage—or even two or three times the minimum—do not earn enough money to maintain a family in health and dignity. Millions of rural families subsist in destitution, well below the indices of poverty established by global financial institutions. The globalization of the economy has been good news for few and very bad news for the poor majority. The Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights (MEDH) in Argentina, has called the results of the two-decade long economic crisis “genocide.” For the MEDH, it is not possible to abstract human rights from issues like external debt, “Plan Colombia,” or the imposed imperial globalization. The MEDH is calling upon Christian families from all around the continent to give a coherent, credible, and joint response to God’s people in face of this genocide, a joint testimony in the mission of defending life with dignity and abundance for all God’s creatures.

4. Social and Cultural Rights

Indigenous peoples all over the continent have their backs against the wall. The national economies are expanding their reach and national infrastructures are reaching into indigenous lands. Add to this the increasing cultural, social, and political penetration of the indigenous cultures by the dominant culture and the situation is one of constant crisis.

5. Religious Rights

The year 2000 saw the implementation of the new law on religious liberty in Chile that grants all churches equal legal status with the Roman Catholic Church. This legislation, which was opposed by the Catholic hierarchy in Chile, was approved largely due to the intense support given it by the 20 percent of the Chilean population that is Protestant.

IV. Endnotes


3. Ibid., 58.


PURPOSE

This study guide has been developed to assist groups and individuals in congregations to

1. engage and focus on human rights;

2. provide guidance for reflecting both biblically and theologically on the church’s responsibility toward human rights; and

3. stimulate congregational support, personal involvement, and action for human rights concerns.

ORGANIZATION FOR THE STUDY

This guide provides a process for four sessions. Most of the resources needed for the study can be found in the Human Rights Update 2000–2001, and its appendixes. Further action and study suggestions are included as well as human rights and church organizations that the study group may contact for more information. It is suggested that all members of the study group receive a copy of the Human Rights Update 2000–2001 or have access to it on the Web (See the inside cover of this document for the Web address.).

A WORD ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL DESIGN OF THE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide was designed on the basis of the following assumptions:

1. Churches often schedule study sessions on Sunday mornings, or in the evening, allowing one and a half or one hour per session.

2. Adults and youth find more meaning and satisfaction when the study connects in some way with their personal lives.

3. Participants bring information from other learning experiences that they like to contribute to their study.

4. Group members appreciate interaction with those who join them in the study, sharing different perspectives or forming common causes.

5. More material is provided for each session than can be used. Choose the parts most helpful to your group or expand to further sessions as desired.

6. A facilitator should be identified to lead each study session.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR USE WITH THE STUDY GUIDE
In addition to the Human Rights Update 2000–2001 report, the following resources are suggested for use with this study guide:

- Bible
- The Book of Confessions
- Book of Order
- Resolution on Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounters with New Neighbors
- Mission Year Book for Prayer & Study 2002
- “General Assembly 2001,” Church & Society, July/August 2001
- Local, national, and international newspapers
SESSION ONE

Human Rights: A United Nations Focus

Scripture: Matthew 25: 31–40 (NRSV)

Verse 31—“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

Verse 32—All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,

Verse 33—and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Verse 34—Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;

Verse 35—for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

Verse 36—I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’

Verse 37—Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

Verse 38—And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?

Verse 39—And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’

Verse 40—And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

Book of Order: The Church is called to be Christ’s faithful evangelist, G-3-0300c:

(3) participating in God’s activity in the world through its life for others by

(a) healing and reconciling and binding up wounds,

(b) ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless,

(c) engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice,

(d) giving itself and its substance to the service of those who suffer,

(e) sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world.

Resolution on Transformation of Churches Through Encounter With New Neighbors:
(1) Christians are obligated by the loving will of God to seek to ensure that the basic needs of persons for food, clothes, shelter, and safety are met (Matt. 25:31–40).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

1. Open with prayer.

2. As stated elsewhere in the global update section of the Human Rights Update 2000–2001, the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has called for efforts to reduce by 2015 the proportion of the world’s people currently living on less than a dollar a day (22 percent) by half, and to reduce by half the number of people who have no access to safe drinking water (20 percent) and to ensure that all children complete a full course of primary education. What are some of the ways the church and community organizations can participate in this process?


4. The 209th General Assembly (1997) “designate[d] the period from the first meeting following our two-year focus on the ‘The Great Ends of the Church’ as ‘Year of the Child’” (Minutes, 1997, Part I, pp. 70, 83, 713). In this year’s global update in the section on “The Status of U.S. Human Rights,” the writer states that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is “one of the most universally ratified human rights conventions in the world. Only two countries have not ratified it: the U.S. and Somalia.” In light of the action taken by the 209th General Assembly (1997), do you feel that it is appropriate for individuals, local congregations, the middle governing bodies, and the various entities of the General Assembly Council to advocate for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the U.S., in particular, and Somalia? Please state a rationale for your response.

5. After reflecting on the data recorded in the global update, what issues do you believe the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may want to encourage the United Nations to continue or begin pursuing during the course of the next 10–50 years to ensure that the needs of “the least of these” are appropriately addressed?

6. Close the session with the Lord’s Prayer.

IDEAS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND RESOURCES
• Review the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Appendix One)

• *Mission Year Book for Prayer & Study* [Published by the Congregational Ministries Division (CMD), available from the Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS) 1-800-524-2612]

• *Resolution on Transformation of Churches Through Encounters with New Neighbors* (Minutes, 1999, Part I, pp. 28, 30, 32, 353–71); or you may obtain a copy of this document by contacting the Presbyterian Distribution Center (PDS) 1-800-524-2612. Please specify PDS order #OGA-99-029

• “The Church in U.S. Society” section of *Church & Society* July/August 2001 issue [Published by the National Ministries Division (NMD), available from the Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS) 1-800-524-2612, Order #72-30-01-604]

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**PREPARATION FOR SESSION TWO**

1. Read the North America regional update.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 (NRSV).

3. Review the local and national newspaper sections.
SESSION TWO

Human Rights: A U.S. Focus

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 (NRSV)

Verse 26—Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

Verse 27—But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

Verse 28—God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are,

Verse 29—so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

Verse 30—[God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

Verse 31—in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

The Book of Confessions: The Confession of 1967, 9.46

A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.


a. In its confessions the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses the faith of the Reformed tradition. . . Related to this central affirmation of God’s sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition: . . .

(4) The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.

The Constitution of the United States of America: Preamble

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.

DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS
1. Open with prayer.

2. Describe how the opening statements in this section challenge your understanding of the role the PC(USA) should play to ensure that the human rights of all people residing in the United States of America are fully protected.

3. Describe how the opening statements in this section challenge your understanding of the role the United States government should play to ensure that the human rights of all people residing in the United States of America are fully protected.

4. What are the major human rights concerns raised in this year’s U.S. regional update?

5. List three ways you believe the human rights concerns raised in this year’s U.S. update might be effectively addressed by the church and the United States government.

6. After reading the U.S. update, what area might you or your congregation continue advocating or become an advocate for human rights of all the people residing in the United States of America (e.g., children, women and men, those in prisons, immigrants, etc.)?

7. Close the session with the Lord’s Prayer.

IDEAS FOR FURTHER STUDY/AND RESOURCES

• Review the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Appendix One).

• Contact a human rights Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) group (Appendix Four).

• Contact a human rights organization (Appendix Five).

• Review “The Church in Global Society” section of Church & Society July/August 2001 issue [See Section One for order information.].

PREPARATION FOR SESSION THREE

• Read the regional updates 2–8.


• Review the international section of a national newspaper (e.g., The New York Times).
SESSION THREE

HUMAN RIGHTS: A FOCUS ON THE REGIONS OF THE PC(USA)’S INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Scripture: 2nd Corinthians 5:16–19 (NRSV)

Verse 16—From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.

Verse 17—So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new!

Verse 18—All this is from God, who reconciled us to [Godself] through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;

Verse 19—that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to [Godself], not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

The Book of Confessions: The Confession of 1967, 9.45

God’s reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding. Reconciliation among nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, diverting their manpower and resource from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of [humankind]. Although nations may serve God’s purposes in history, the church which identifies with the sovereignty of any one nation or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and betrays its calling.


As Presbyterians we do mission in partnership. We have, in recent decades, sought to be more intentional in our mission through a “partnership” based on mutual respect and sharing with churches around the world. We understand Partnership in Mission to be that disciplined approach that assumes the goals can best be accomplished by joining hands with those who share a common vision.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

1. Open with prayer.

2. How did the human rights concerns raised in sections 2–3 of this year’s regional updates challenge your understanding of the basic human rights (e.g., freedom of religion, freedom of expression, etc.) that are daily denied to our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world?

3. As applicable, compare and contrast the civil, political, economic, social and cultural, and religious rights of each international area cited in this year’s regional update.

4. Identify some of the ways you believe the PC(USA) can continue to lift up to its members, ecumenical partners, and the U.S. government the human rights concerns brought to our attention, for the most part by our partner churches?

5. Describe how the passages cited at the beginning of this session challenge your understanding as to why and how the church and the U.S. government should both be an advocate for the human rights of our international sisters and brothers (both Christians and persons of other faith traditions).

6. After reading this year’s international regional updates, identify three to five ways you individually, your local congregation, presbytery, and community organizations are currently working to promote the human rights of our international sisters and brothers.

7. Close the session with the Lord’s Prayer.

IDEAS FOR FURTHER STUDY/AND RESOURCES

- Mission Year Book for Prayer & Study [See Section One for ordering information.]
- “The Church In Its Own Life” section of Church & Society July/August 2001 issue [See Section One for ordering information.]

PREPARATION FOR SESSION FOUR

- Reread the entire Human Rights Update 2000–2001
SESSION FOUR

Human Rights: Internal/External Challenges and Signs of Hope?

Scripture: Psalm 8 (NRSV)

Verse 1—O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Verse 2—Out of the mouth of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

Verse 3—When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

Verse 4—what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Verse 5—Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

Verse 6—You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

Verse 7—all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

Verse 8—the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

Verse 9—O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!


Already God’s reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in men [women] and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgment and redemption.

With an urgency born of this hope the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In steadfast hope, the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.

Book of Order: Form G-3.0100

The mission of the Church is given form by God’s activity in the world as told in the Bible and understood by faith.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 27
1. *Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancements and its benefits.*

2. *Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.*

**DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS**

1. Open with prayer.

2. In light of the statements above, describe three internal challenges that currently affect the way you as an individual, your local congregation, and community respond to the human rights concerns of persons incarcerated in the U.S. and overseas.

3. In light of the statements cited above, describe three external challenges that currently affect the way you as an individual, your local congregation and community respond to the human rights concerns identified in this year’s human rights update.

4. In this year’s update, did you find any signs of hope in the worldwide human rights struggle based on actions taken by the church?

5. In this year’s update, did you discern any signs of hope in the worldwide human rights struggle based on actions taken by local, state, and national governments. Elaborate on your response.

**IDEAS FOR FURTHER STUDY/AND RESOURCES**

- Read *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development* [Published by the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), available from the Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS) 1-888-728-7228]
APPENDIX ONE

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

[Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly of the
United Nations resolution 217 A(II) of 10 December 1948.]

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be projected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims

This Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3
Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

_Article 4_

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

_Article 5_

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

_Article 6_

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

_Article 7_

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

_Article 8_

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

_Article 9_

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

_Article 10_

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

_Article 11_

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offense on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offense, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offense was committed.

_Article 12_

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

_Article 13_

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

*Article 14*

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

*Article 15*

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

*Article 16*

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitations due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

*Article 17*

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

*Article 18*

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

*Article 19*

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

*Article 20*

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

*Article 21*

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access of public service in his country.

3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

**Article 22**

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

**Article 23**

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

**Article 24**

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

**Article 25**

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

**Article 26**

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.
Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

[This information copied from The International Bill of Human Rights, Department of Public Information (United Nations: New York, 1985) pp. 4–9].]
APPENDIX TWO

213TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2001)

ACTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

[All references can be found in the Minutes, 2001, Part I.]


“Acknowledge the Catholic Church as Part of the Body of Christ” [Ibid., p. 143.]

“Commitment to Peacemaking” [Ibid., p. 193.]

“Communique from the Synod of the Nile of the Evangelical Church of Egypt” [Ibid., p. 179]

“Interim Statement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo” [Ibid., p. 227]

“Renewing the Commitment: A Churchwide Strategy for Ministry in Higher Education” [Ibid., p. 195.]

“Resolution on Small Arms—An Unaddressed Arms Control Issue From Cultures of Violence to Cultures of Peace?” [Ibid., p. 274.]

“Resolution on the International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations” [Ibid., p. 278]

“Resolution on the International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (2001) and the World Conference on Global Racism” [Ibid., p. 285]

“Resolution on the Ministry of Caregiving in Relation to Older Adults” [Ibid., p. 281.]


“State Religious Liberty Protection Acts” [Ibid., pp. 155, 511, 512, 659.]

“Task Force to Examine the Current Racial Justice Policies and Programs of the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment Loans Program, Inc., and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation in Relation to the Racial Ethnic Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” [Ibid., p. 333.]

“Task Force to Study the Disenfranchisement of People of Color, in the United States’ Electoral System” [Ibid., p. 333.]

“Task Force to Study the Issue of Reparations for African Americans, Native Americans, and Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Others who have Experienced Unjust Treatment” [Ibid., p. 333.]

“Talisman Energy Inc. and the Sudan” [Ibid., p. 212.]

“Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence” [Ibid., p. 233.]

“Women and AIDS: A Global Crisis” [Ibid., p. 335.]

*Overture 01-16. On Advocating Passage of Legislation Requiring Health Insurance Plans to Provide Mental Health Benefits in Full Parity with Medical and Surgical Benefits—From the Presbytery of Pittsburgh.* [Ibid., p. 419.]
Overture 01-25. On Communicating to Pastors That the “Left Behind” Series Is Based on an Interpretation of the Bible That Is Not in Accord with Our Reformed Theology—From the Presbytery of Sierra Blanca. [Ibid., p. 433.]

Overture 01-33. On Appointing a Theological Commission to Study the Spiritual Condition of Our Church and the Causes for Unrest, Report to the 217th General Assembly (2005)—From the Presbytery of John Calvin. [Ibid., p. 443.]

Overture 01-41. On Directing the National Ministries Division to Offer Transformational Resources to Those Who Struggle with Sexual Purity and Report to the 214th General Assembly (2002)—From the Presbytery of San Joaquin. [Ibid., p. 453]

Overture 01-46. On Calling for a “Decade of the Child” to Extend the Issues and Initiatives Begun This Past Year of the Child—From the Presbytery of Mission. [Ibid., p. 458.]

Overture 01-50. On Adopting a Resolution Enunciating Ethical Guidelines for Fetal Tissue and Stem Cell Research—From the Presbytery of Baltimore. [Ibid., p. 461.]

Overture 01-53. On Directing the ACSWP and the Washington Office to Respond to the Public Policy of Faith-Based Initiatives—From the Presbytery of Albany. [Ibid., p. 465]

Overture 01-55. On Directing CMD to Develop Study Materials to Provide Guidance on the Relationship of the Finding of the Sciences to the Affirmation of God as Creator of the Universe—From the Presbytery of National Capital. [Ibid., p. 467.]

Overture 01-57. On Helping Children by Establishing a Voluntary Adoption Fund—From the Presbytery of Long Island. [Ibid., p. 469.]

Overture 01-59. On Peaceful Alternatives to the U.S. “War on Drugs” in Colombia—From the Presbytery of the Cascades. [Ibid., p. 470.]

Overture 01-60. On Preserving Biodiversity and Halting Mass Extinction—From the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley. [Ibid., p. 473.]

Overture 01-62. On Peace Efforts in the Middle East—From the Presbytery of Central Florida. [Ibid., p. 477.]

Overture 01-64. On Supporting the Global Nonviolent Peace Force—From the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. [Ibid., p. 479.]

Overture 01-66. On Decreasing the Military Assistance and Sales to Middle Eastern Nations—From the Presbytery of Chicago. [Ibid., p. 481.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 00-5. On Parity of Insurance Coverage for Biologically Based Brain Disease. [Ibid., p. 483.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-02. On Supporting Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. [Ibid., p. 487.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-3. Apology to Americans of African Descent for the Institution of Slavery. [Ibid., p. 487.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-6. On Having the PC(USA) Ask the Israeli Government to Withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territories. [Ibid., p. 489.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-9. On Making American Law Applicable to Adult American’s Behavior
Overseas. [Ibid., p. 490.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-12. On the Civil War in Sudan. [Ibid., p. 491.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-16. Supporting Tohono Odham Treaty Rights. [Ibid., p. 494.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-18. On a Communication to the Reformed Church in America on Our Common Work in Sudan. [Ibid., p. 496.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-20. On the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s Statement on Suicide Prevention. [Ibid., p. 497.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-21. On Denouncing Racial Slurs Against Asian Americans. [Ibid., p. 497]


Commissioners’ Resolution 01-29. On the Klamath Basin Drought. [Ibid., p. 503.]

Commissioners’ Resolution 01-31. On Addressing the New Church Development Associate and Conferences. [Ibid., p. 504.]
[Copies of these updates may be accessed via the Minutes of the General Assembly or you may purchased a copy from the Presbyterian Distribution Center (PDS) 1-800-524-2612. Please specify the PDS order number when you place your order.]


APPENDIX FOUR

HUMAN RIGHTS—PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) GROUPS

The following ministry areas can be contacted through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for information on action strategies and/or research on human rights violations.

Robert F. Smylie, Coordinator
*Presbyterian United Nations Office*
777 United Nations Plaza, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone: (212) 697-4568
Fax: (212) 986-3002
E-mail: GWISSUES@aol.com

Elenora Giddings Ivory, Director
*Presbyterian Washington Office*
110 Maryland Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 543-1126
Fax: (202) 543-7755
E-mail: EIvory@ctr.pcusa.org

Belinda M. Curry, Associate
Policy Development and Interpretation
*Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy*
Editor, *Human Rights Update*
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396
Phone: 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5813
Fax: (502) 569-8034
E-mail: Belindac@ctr.pcusa.org

Ecumenical Partnership

Worldwide Ministries Division
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396
1-888-728-7228, ext. 5347

Area offices and coordinators include:

**Central/West Africa**
Doug Welch, ext. 5353
Dwelch@ctr.pcusa.org

**South America**
Maria Arroyo, ext. 5315
Marroyo@ctr.pcusa.org

**Southern/East Africa**
Jon Chapman, ext. 5352
Jone@ctr.pcusa.org

**Europe**
Duncan Hanson, ext. 5313
DuncanH@ctr.pcusa.org

**Central America/Caribbean/Mexico**
Julia Ann Moffett, ext. 5316
JuliaM@ctr.pcusa.org

**Middle East**
Victor Makari, ext. 5314
Vctor@ctr.pcusa.org

**East Asia/Pacific**

**South/Southeast Asia**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insik Kim, ext. 5354</th>
<th>Leslie L. Sauer, ext. 5110</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:InsikK@ctr.pcusa.org">InsikK@ctr.pcusa.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Lsauer@ctr.pcusa.org">Lsauer@ctr.pcusa.org</a></td>
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APPENDIX FIVE

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations provide action strategies and/or research information on human rights violations. This list highlights a few of the best-known organizations, but it does not pretend to be exhaustive. Survey the members of your study group or congregation. You will probably discover that some of them are already affiliated with human rights organizations in your region or community. We encourage you to learn more about all those groups and consider which ones may be most helpful to you as you carry on your concerns of human rights.

Amnesty International U.S.A.

AIUSA is a volunteer organization that seeks to secure the release of Prisoners of Conscience, advocates for fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners, and opposes cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment, particularly the use of torture and the death penalty.

For membership and community group information, contact the regional office for your state. For Urgent Action notices on cases about which you may write appeals, contact the Urgent Action Network Office in Nederland, Colorado. For information on national legislation and diplomatic contacts, contact the Washington Office.

For other information contact the National Office in New York City. Annual national membership $25 ($15 for students, senior citizens, and low income).


322-8th Ave.  Community Action Bulletin
10th Floor  (an action/information bulletin for
New York, NY 10001  the religious community)
(212) 807-8400

Center for Human Rights

New York Office 2-2914
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
(212) 963-5930

This office is an excellent resource for information on a wide variety of human rights concerns and for information on United Nations’ efforts to address human rights violations through investigations, conventions, etc. They publish occasional materials and have a series of fact sheets on various aspects of human rights. Most of their publications are free of charge.

Department of State

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices
Superintendent of Documents
P.O. Box 371954
Pittsburgh, PA 15250
(202) 512-1800
The U.S. Department of State submits an annual report on human rights practices around the world to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs. The report is usually available at the end of January of the year following the year about which the report is made.

**Human Rights Office, National Council of Churches**

475 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY 10115  
(212) 870-2424

The Human Rights Office at the NCCC provides an annual packet of materials for a service of worship on Human Rights Day, December 10th. The office monitors human rights situations particularly as they concern partner churches around the globe. The office participates in any emergency response network and advocates for human rights concerns at the United Nations and other international forums.

**Human Rights Watch**

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Office Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>485-5th Ave.</td>
<td>(212) 972-8400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>New York, NY 10017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>(212) 972-8400</td>
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The Watch organizations conduct systematic investigations of human rights abuses in some sixty countries around the world, of all political stripes, of all geopolitical alignments. In wars—such as those in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, and El Salvador—they document abuses by all parties. They defend freedom of thought and expression, due process of law, and equal protection of law. They denounce murders, disappearances, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, exile, psychiatric abuse, censorship, and other abuses of internationally recognized human rights.

The Watch organizations publish an annual report that is available free of charge. They also regularly publish reports on particular countries that are available for purchase from the publication office at the above address.

**Lawyers’ Committee on Human Rights**

330-7th Ave., 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
(212) 629-6170

The Lawyers’ Committee addresses international human rights violations and refugee law. They prepare reports on human rights violations around the world with particular reference to human rights violations and the legal system.

A publications catalogue of country and issue reports is available from the above address. They also publish an annual critique of the U.S. Department of State “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.”