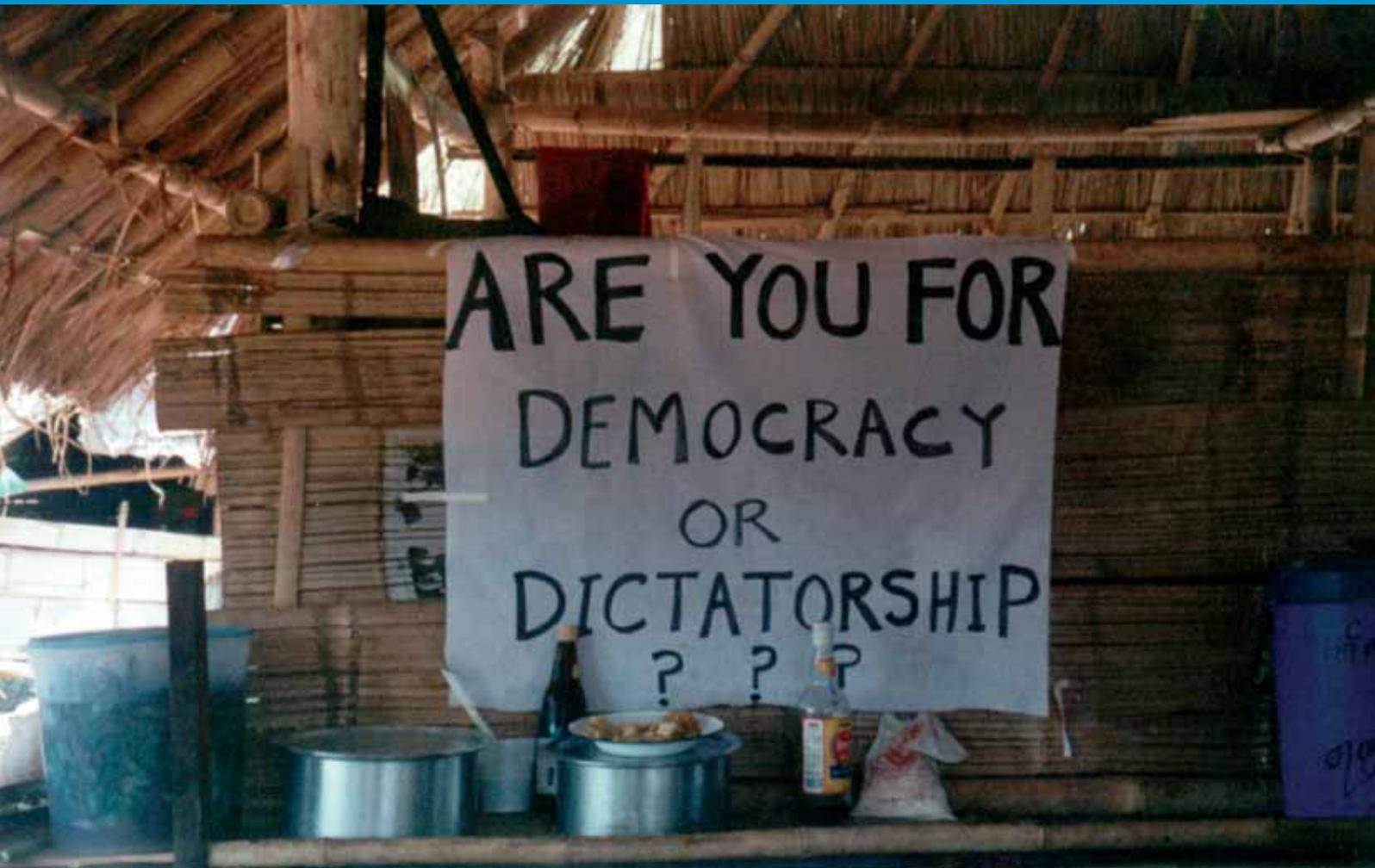


The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission



ANNUAL REPORT 2006

www.conservativehumanrights.com



Conservatives

Cover photo – taken by Benedict Rogers in a village of internally displaced people in Burma

Back page – photo of burned-out village in Burma taken by Christopher Chan; second photo provided by Free Burma Rangers

"Human dignity, personal freedom, national self-determination – these are the aspirations for all people everywhere. But if we assume – and I think we should assume – some responsibility for extending these values internationally, we must strive to do so in a way that is consistent and honourable. A moral mission requires moral methods."

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP,
Leader of the Conservative Party

"Human rights abuses in the 21st Century cannot be tolerated. Yet across the world unjust imprisonment, detention without trial, and torture continue to be seen ... Human rights do not apply solely to the Western world, nor do they reflect standards from which particular cultures or religions can choose to opt out. They exist to protect people everywhere against political, legal, and social abuses ... Speaking as Shadow Foreign Secretary, I believe that we must conduct our foreign policy in a way that does not deviate from our values; central to which is a deeply-held belief in the primacy and inviolability of individual human rights. Our foreign policy must be pro-active in supporting democracy and those who bravely champion freedom in their own countries. It must put economic and political pressure on brutal regimes, and it must seek to hold them to account."

The Rt Hon William Hague MP,
Shadow Foreign Secretary

"If you cross the path of tyranny, or incipient tyranny, I believe there is a duty to fight it If you achieve a voice that will be heard, you should use it to speak up for the voiceless and oppressed. If you possess any power or authority, you must strive to use it to help and to empower the powerless."

Craig Murray, former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, in
*Murder in Samarkand: A British Ambassador's Controversial
Defiance of Tyranny in the War on Terror*

"I remember people saying about South Africa and apartheid that it is an internal affair how they deal with their own citizens. There are certain internal policies about which, yes, that is true, but there are other internal policies which are an affront to the world ... There are no frontiers in human rights. If a government treats its people as if they were rubbish, this cannot any longer be an internal affair."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

"We can no longer plead ignorance. We cannot turn aside."

William Wilberforce

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"

Article 1,
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Foreword



By The Rt. Hon. William Hague MP Shadow Foreign Secretary

Freedom and human dignity are at the very heart of Conservative values. Our belief in opportunity, enterprise, the rule of law and limited Government are founded on a passionate defence of liberty.

It is absolutely essential, therefore, that we apply those values to all areas of policy, domestic and foreign. That is why I said earlier this year in a speech to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission that I would place human rights and democracy at the very heart of foreign policy.

In the United Kingdom today, the phrase "human rights" has been undermined and devalued by a domestic rights-based culture which ignores our responsibilities. It is time to change that, and restore credibility to the values of human rights once again.

We have the privilege of living in freedom. But with that privilege comes the responsibility to use our liberty to speak up for those who are denied it. Around the world, people have been jailed simply for expressing an opinion, writing a poem, drawing a cartoon or believing in a religion that is not in line with the views of their rulers. In North Korea, Burma, Sudan,

Zimbabwe, Cuba, Belarus, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkmenistan and Tibet, to name just a few, torture is said to be widespread and systematic. People are denied the basic freedoms we enjoy – freedom of speech, assembly, press, movement and religion. In some cases, people are terrorised by tyrants who not only suppress dissent and free speech, but rape, loot, destroy and kill.

In 2007 we will mark the bicentenary of William Wilberforce's legislation to abolish the slave trade. The modern, compassionate Conservative Party follows in the tradition of Wilberforce. But while his life and legacy should be celebrated, we should remember that his work is not over. Slavery is rife in the world today. In many countries there are modern forms of slavery – forced labour, bonded labour, the forced conscription of child soldiers and human trafficking. In India, 250 million Dalits and tribals are treated as "untouchables" by the caste system and are born into slavery.

In the year since it was founded, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission has been an active voice for the persecuted and oppressed around the world. I have followed their activities – hearings, debates, Parliamentary Questions, briefings, petitions and protests – with great interest, and I have no doubt that the Commission will play a crucial role in informing and influencing our foreign policy. It is not only morally right that we should speak for the oppressed, it is also in our national interests to do so. Dictators do not make the best allies. Freedom and prosperity go together. So I commend the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission for its excellent work in 2006, documented in this Annual Report, and I look forward to working with them to develop our freedom agenda for the future. ■

Introduction



**By Gary Streeter MP
Chairman of the Conservative Party
Human Rights Commission**

In the summer of 2005, when the Shadow Foreign Secretary asked me to chair the newly established Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, I was delighted. Promoting freedom, democracy, human rights and respect for human dignity are causes close to my heart, and I am delighted to have an opportunity to play a part in being a voice for those who are denied their basic freedoms.

We formally launched the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission at a fringe meeting at the Party Conference in Blackpool in October 2005. Since then, our work has really got under way, and I am pleased to present this first Annual Report.

This Annual Report falls into four main sections.

Firstly, we provide a summary of our activities in 2006 – the hearings, events, debates, meetings and protests we have held, the fact-finding visits we have made, the questions we have raised in Parliament and the petitions and appeals we have sent on behalf of those imprisoned and persecuted.

Secondly, we present a brief analysis of the human rights situation in our countries of focus – 18 countries on which we have concentrated in-depth this year, a

mix of some of the world's worst violators, such as Burma and North Korea, some of the world's most forgotten countries, such as Eritrea, and some countries which have a real potential for transition from authoritarianism to democracy, such as The Maldives. We are grateful to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch for providing information and advice to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, and to Freedom House and Christian Solidarity Worldwide for contributing their expertise by reviewing the draft chapters of this report, and proposing valuable amendments, prior to publication.

Thirdly, we offer a ranking of the countries, rated according to key criteria. The methodology for this has been adapted from Freedom House's measurement system, but with some of our own criteria added.

Finally, we provide some key policy recommendations – which we will urge the current Government to adopt, and which we will propose for a future Conservative Government.

It has been an exciting and busy year, and sometimes a harrowing one. I will never forget sitting for three gruelling hours in our first hearing, on Burma, listening as the evidence of crimes against humanity and possible genocide in that country piled up in front of us. How many years, as Bob Dylan asks in *Blowing in the Wind*, can a people exist before they are allowed to be free? How long can man's inhumanity to man continue unnoticed, unheard, unchecked? Our responsibility in the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is to make sure that the international community has no excuse for inaction or silence. Our responsibility is to be a voice for the voiceless. Our work is only just beginning. ■

About the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

The Conservative Party follows in the tradition of William Wilberforce, who as a Member of Parliament 200 years ago led the campaign to end the slave trade. Freedom, democracy, human dignity, opportunity, and the rule of law are at the heart of our politics. They are values which should be applied to all areas of policy, domestic and international.

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is a body established by the Shadow Foreign Secretary to highlight international human rights concerns, and to inform, advise and develop the party's foreign policy by making human rights a priority. Freedom and human dignity should be at the heart of foreign policy.

Established in 2005, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is chaired by Gary Streeter MP. Members of the Commission include MPs Michael Gove, John Bercow, David Burrowes, Mark Pritchard and Gerald Howarth, and human rights activist and writer Benedict Rogers. The Commission works closely with a number of human rights organisations, including Amnesty International. The Commission builds on the ideas set out in *New Ground: Engaging People with the Conservative Party through a bold, principled and imaginative foreign policy* (www.newground.org.uk), a paper published in 2003 by James Mawdsley and Benedict Rogers.

In its initial phase, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission has focused on 18 primary countries of concern. These include some of the worst possible offenders, such as North Korea and Burma, and some of the smallest, most forgotten situations such as The Maldives and Eritrea. The countries of focus are drawn from all continents, from Cuba to Vietnam, Nepal to Iran, Sudan to Belarus, and they include human rights violations perpetrated by both State and non-State parties. For example, in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, violations are perpetrated by the State, but in India the

violations against the Dalits, which the Commission will concentrate on, are primarily the result of societal and cultural factors.

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission's main activities include:

- regular hearings on countries and themes;
- monthly updates drawn from different human rights organisations and media sources;
- speaker meetings, press conferences and events;
- Parliamentary Questions, Early Day Motions and debates;
- an Annual Report on Human Rights developing policy proposals for a future Conservative Government. ■

Members of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

Chairman – Gary Streeter MP



Gary Streeter is Member of Parliament for South West Devon, and also serves as Chairman of the Conservative Party International Office. He is Vice Chairman of the

Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the UK's democracy building foundation. He has served as a Government Minister from 1995-97, and as Shadow Secretary of State for International Development from 1998-2001.

regularly briefs Parliamentarians and Government officials in the UK, European Union and United States on international human rights issues.

Treasurer – Jenny Parsons



Jenny Parsons has a professional background in media and politics. She is currently special adviser to Andrew Lansley MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for Health.

Deputy Chairman – Benedict Rogers



Ben is a human rights activist and journalist, and stood as the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate in the City of Durham in the General Election in

2005. He is the co-author of *New Ground: Engaging People with the Conservative Party through a bold, principled and imaginative foreign policy* (www.newground.org.uk), and author of *A Land Without Evil: Stopping the Genocide of Burma's Karen People* (Monarch, 2004). He has contributed articles to a variety of publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *Conservativehome.com* and *Crisis* magazine, and has spoken at the White House, the US Congress, the National Young Leaders Conference, Yale University, Columbia University, the Foreign Correspondents Club of Hong Kong, the Conservative Party Conference and the International Christian Human Rights Conference. He works for Christian Solidarity Worldwide, and is a Trustee of the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART). He travels regularly on fact-finding visits to Burma's border regions, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and East Timor, and has made many visits to China. He has also visited the Maldives, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, and

John Bercow MP –



Member of Parliament for Buckingham. John Bercow is a former Shadow Secretary of State for International Development, and a member of the International Development Select

Committee. He is Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Democracy in Burma, Vice-Chair of the APPG on Genocide Prevention and Secretary of the APPG on Human Rights. John Bercow has travelled to many conflict areas, including Darfur, Zimbabwe, the Thai-Burmese border and Gaza and the West Bank. In 2005, he received the Channel Four/Hansard Society Political Award for Opposition MP of the Year and the *House Magazine* Award for Backbencher of the Year.

David Burrowes MP –



Member of Parliament for Enfield Southgate and Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Social Justice Policy Group's Addiction and Indebtedness Working Party. He is a Criminal

Law Solicitor-Advocate.

Michael Gove MP – Member of Parliament



for Surrey Heath and Shadow Minister for Housing. Before entering Parliament, Michael Gove was a journalist with *The Times* and regularly appeared on BBC

Radio 4's *The Moral Maze*. He was also Chairman of the think tank Policy Exchange. He is the author of a new book on the rise of militant Islamism, called *Celsius 7/7*.

Gerald Howarth MP – Member of Parliament for Aldershot and Shadow Minister for Defence.



Mark Pritchard MP – Member of Parliament for The Wrekin and Joint Secretary of the Conservative Party's Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee.



Sajid Javid – Managing Director of an international investment bank. He is based in London but does business globally throughout emerging market countries. He is married with three young children.

Warren Davies – Warren studied law at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and Thomas Masaryk University in the Czech Republic. He then went on to gain a Masters degree in Human Rights Law from the



University of Durham and train at the Inns of Court School of Law for the Bar. Warren previously worked in the Political Section at Conservative Central Office writing briefing documents for the Shadow Cabinet. Warren currently serves in the Territorial Army and as a District Councillor for Welwyn Hatfield District Council.

Samuel Burke – Sam is a Parliamentary Research Assistant and is reading Law at the London School of Economics (LSE). He is Chairman of his constituency Conservative Future and currently serves in



the Royal Naval Reserve. In 2004, he visited the Democratic Republic of Congo with Lord Alton of Liverpool, sponsored by Jubilee Campaign. Sam also has experience working for a US Senator.

Martin Smith – Martin holds a first-class honours degree in European Studies (Economics, Languages and Politics) from Royal Holloway, University of London and works as a representative for the Forum of Private



Business, a UK small-business organisation, in Brussels. Martin was a Conservative local government election candidate in the London Borough of Southwark in 2006. He is a former university and area chairman of Conservative Future, and former vice-chairman of European Democrat Students

(EDS), a pan-European Centre-Right youth organisation. Through EDS he met several activists of the democratic resistance in Belarus, a country whose cause he has taken up ever since.

Rado Tylecote – Rado has worked as a strategy consultant and a researcher at Policy Exchange and Wave Network. He has experience of political work overseas in Bangkok, for the Center for the Study of the Presidency in Washington, DC and for the Burmese Government in Exile. He has also lived and worked in Vietnam. He is currently reading an MPhil in Chinese at Cambridge University.



Samuel Coates – Samuel is Deputy Editor of *ConservativeHome.com* and is studying Politics and International Relations at Oxford Brookes University, where he is Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Area Chairman of Conservative Future. He has previously worked for the *Liverpool Echo* and *Daily Post* newspapers, and a target seat election campaign.



Jo Barker – Jo has a BSc. in Geography and is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. She is married and runs her family's property business in the Midlands. She is a former Chairman of Streatham Conservative Association.



Nicola Blackwood – Nicola is studying for a D.Phil. in cultural history. She has visited and volunteered at aid projects in Bangladesh, Israel, South Africa and Mozambique, and previously worked as Parliamentary



Researcher to Andrew Mitchell MP, Shadow Secretary of State for International Development. Nicola has also worked as an intern with the Political Unit in the Conservative Research Department and the Conservative Campaign Headquarters Press Office and stood as a city council candidate at the local elections.

Sarah Haldane – Sarah has a first class honours degree in International Relations and Journalism from her native Australia and an MA in International Studies and Diplomacy from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. She has lived in Japan and South Korea, and is involved in community projects in South Africa, Taiwan and China with her South Korean husband. Sarah is the National Co-ordinator of the Conservative Christian Fellowship. ■



Activities 2006

Hearings

The Commission held hearings on Burma and Eritrea in Parliament in 2006.

Burma

In a three-hour hearing on Burma on 25 April, the Commission heard evidence presented by Charm Tong of the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), Nurul Islam, President of the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation, Guy Horton, author of *Dying Alive: A Legal Assessment of Human Rights Violations in Burma* and Mark Farmaner, Campaigns Manager at Burma Campaign UK.

The hearing came amidst new reports of a deteriorating situation in Karen State. In the preceding weeks, over 11,000 civilians had been displaced by Burma Army attacks in one area alone. This figure subsequently rose to over 20,000. Several bodies have been found, including one beheaded and some badly mutilated. A nine year-old girl was shot after her father and grandmother were killed. Burma Army troops opened fire on civilians at point-blank range.

Charm Tong, a founder of the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), presented extensive evidence of the increasing militarisation of Burma, a country which spends less than one per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on health and education, the lowest in the world, and over 40 per cent on the military.

Charm Tong also provided evidence of the widespread and systematic use of rape as a weapon of war. In the report *Licence to Rape*, published by SWAN in 2002, at least 173 incidents of rape were documented, involving 625 women and girls. Of these cases, 83 per cent were carried out by officers, often in front of troops, and 61 per cent were gang rapes. Similar evidence of rape has been documented by groups in Karen and other ethnic areas.

Charm Tong described the plight of the internally displaced people in Burma, and

refugees on the Thai-Burmese border. Over one million people are internally displaced in eastern Burma alone, and over 155,000 refugees are in camps in Thailand.

Nurul Islam, President of the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation, described the suffering of the Rohingya people on the Burma-Bangladesh border. Describing his people as "one of the most persecuted and forgotten peoples on earth," Nurul Islam said: "The Rohingyas are oppressed and persecuted beyond all measure. They have been invariably subjected to criminal atrocities, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment, extrajudicial killing and summary execution, arrest and detention, rape, looting, destruction of homes, settlements, religious schools and mosques, forced labour, forced relocation, forced eviction and expulsion, confiscation of moveable and immovable properties, relentless taxation and extortion, restriction on their freedom of movement and residence within the state, prohibition of their right to marry and to found a family without permission, restriction and/or denial of their right to education, right to work and to get access to food and other essentials, medical care and necessary social services." Burma's military regime, he added, has declared the Rohingyas as non-nationals "in utter disregard of their history."

Guy Horton, a human rights researcher funded by the Government of the Netherlands and author of *Dying Alive: A Legal Assessment of Human Rights Violations in Burma*, presented comprehensive evidence of widespread destruction and violence in eastern Burma, and argued that the abuses violate international law, particularly Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and laws on Crimes against Humanity and Genocide. He drew attention to the remarks of the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma, Paulo Pinheiro, who concluded in his report of February 2006 that: "The current Government strategy of targeting civilians in the course of its military operations

represents a willful abrogation of its responsibility under international law." As far back as 1998, as Mr. Horton highlighted, the then Special Rapporteur Rajsoolah Lallah QC said: "The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned about the serious human rights violations that continue to be committed by the armed forces in the ethnic minority areas. The violations include extrajudicial and arbitrary executions (not excluding women and children), rape, torture, inhuman treatment, forced labour and denial of freedom of movement. These violations have been so numerous and consistent over the past years as to suggest they are not simply isolated or the acts of individual behaviour by middle or lower rank officers but are the result of policy at the highest level, entailing legal and political responsibility."

Mr. Horton urged the international community to establish a United Nations Commission of Enquiry into the question of attempted genocide in Burma, and he encouraged the UK and other countries who are signatories to the Genocide Convention to refer a case of attempted genocide in Burma to the International Court of Justice.

Mark Farmaner, Campaigns Manager at Burma Campaign UK, presented a number of policy recommendations to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission. He highlighted the weaknesses in the current EU Common Position in Burma, and urged the UK to introduce tougher targeted sanctions against the regime in Burma. He emphasised that the UK does not currently provide any support to pro-democracy or human rights groups in exile on Burma's borders, or any cross-border humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced people in the conflict zones of Burma.

All four speakers urged the UK to continue to work to bring the issue of Burma to the agenda of the UN Security Council this year.

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission has been considering all the

evidence presented and is developing a number of policy recommendations. In particular, the Commission urges the British Government to increase its efforts to bring Burma to the UN Security Council agenda, provide support to pro-democracy groups and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people, and consider introducing targeted sanctions against the regime.

The hearing was followed by an event at which Charm Tong and Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague spoke. Describing Charm Tong as "a heroine in the fight for freedom: A young woman who has seen, day after day, the suffering of her own people at the hands of one of the world's most brutal regimes and who has bravely chosen to speak out," Mr. Hague added: "Today, I want to say to Charm Tong that the Conservative Party stands with her."

Charm Tong with William Hague



A summary of findings from the hearing was sent by Gary Streeter MP to all Members of Parliament of all political parties. The Commission has worked with the Shadow Foreign Secretary on a number of other initiatives, including media contributions and a letter to the Foreign Secretary.

Please see www.conservativehumanrights.com for the full text, and audio versions, of speeches by William Hague and Charm Tong, and the evidence provided by the four speakers at the hearing.

Eritrea

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission held a hearing in Parliament on the human rights situation in Eritrea on July 12.

The Commission heard evidence from four speakers, and invited contributions from the

floor. Eritrea, according to Noel Joseph, Director of Eritreans for Human and Democratic Rights, is ruled by "one of the most brutal regimes in the world." Thousands are reportedly in prison for their political or religious beliefs, some in shipping containers and small cells. Torture is routine and widespread and many prisoners are held in solitary confinement. There is no press freedom in the country and religious freedom for Christians and Muslims is heavily restricted.

Evidence was also presented of the intimidation of Eritrean dissidents in the UK by agents of the Eritrean regime. Video footage was shown of a meeting in London of Eritrean exiles being violently disrupted by representatives of the regime. The number of Eritrean asylum seekers in the UK has risen from 20 in 1993 to 1,105 in 2004, as more people flee the country. "Our basic rights have been trampled on," said Selam Kidane, Co-ordinator of Release Eritrea.

The speakers urged the Commission to work with other Parliamentarians of all parties to urge the British Government to increase pressure on Eritrea to respect human rights. The European Union should increase efforts to facilitate the border demarcation process and urge the Eritrean Government to immediately ratify the Constitution.

Burned-out tanks in Eritrea (photo provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide)



The Commission will continue its investigation of human rights violations in Eritrea. We welcome continued submissions from Eritrean groups and will invite the Eritrean Ambassador to respond to the allegations in due course.

Fact-finding Visits

The Deputy Chairman of the Commission made an official fact-finding visit to the Maldives in June. He had discussions with the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Attorney-General and other Government Ministers, as well as members of opposition parties and the media. He visited Mohamed Nasheed, the Chairperson of the Maldivian Democratic Party, and human rights defender Jennifer Latheef, both in house arrest at the time. He delivered a lecture on



Ben Rogers with Mohamed Nasheed

human rights to the Maldivian Police Force, and spoke at a public meeting organised by Minivan Radio. For further

information and a copy of the report, see www.conservativehumanrights.com.

Members of the Commission have made visits to a number of other countries, including Belarus, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Vietnam. A copy of the report on Vietnam is available on our website.

Parliamentary Debates and Questions

MPs who sit on the Commission have initiated or contributed to several Parliamentary debates, and tabled numerous Parliamentary Questions. It is not possible to reproduce them all here, but we provide some examples and extracts.

On 18 May, John Bercow MP contributed to a debate on the Darfur Crisis in Sudan, in



Rado Tylecote with dissidents in Vietnam

Westminster Hall. "The people of Darfur have been victims of some of the most egregious human rights abuses inflicted on anyone, anywhere in the world at any time in recent memory," he said. He also spoke on Darfur in a debate on Security (Sudan) in Westminster Hall on 17 January.

Gary Streeter MP has tabled numerous Parliamentary Questions on issues such as Burma, Belarus, India, The Maldives, North Korea, Uganda and Human Rights. For example, on 16 May he tabled a question to the Secretary of State for International Development to ask, "What financial support his Department has provided to pro-democracy groups related to Burma in the last three financial periods." The Minister of State at the Department for International Development's answer was: "DFID has not provided any support directly to pro-democracy groups related to Burma in the last three financial periods."

Mr. Streeter also tabled a question on 28 November, 2005 – "To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what formal procedures are in place within his Department for taking into account for the purposes of UK foreign policy the human rights record of a country." The Minister answered: "Human rights are "mainstreamed" within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). British missions abroad, geographic and relevant functional departments in London, are asked to monitor the human rights situations of the countries they are accredited to or work with, and to reflect this in their policy advice

to Ministers, their project work and wider engagement with those countries. Mainstreaming is underpinned by regular training on human rights issues for FCO staff, and by support and advice from the FCO's Human Rights, Democracy and Governance Group."

On 24 October, John Bercow MP contributed to a debate on Burma in Westminster Hall initiated by Stephen Crabb MP. The Commission provided briefing for several speakers in the debate.

Mark Pritchard MP, Michael Gove MP and David Burrowes MP have also tabled numerous Parliamentary Questions on the human rights situations in our countries of focus, and other related concerns.

Early Day Motions

MPs who sit as members of the Commission have sponsored, or in some cases been the primary sponsor, of numerous Early Day Motions (EDMs). A selection of these include:

EDM 2353 – Genocide Suspects in the UK – primary sponsor: John Bercow MP (tabled 13 June, 2006)

That this House notes that grave allegations have been placed in the public domain regarding the presence within the UK of alleged perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide; calls for the British Government to ensure that such individuals are formally investigated and prosecutions or removal proceedings brought where appropriate; and urges the Government urgently to seek any legislative changes needed to do so.

EDM 2151 – Attacks on Civilians in Karen State, Burma – primary sponsor: John Bercow MP (tabled 11 May 2006)

That this House condemns the gross violations of human rights perpetrated by the Burma Army in Karen State, Burma, in recent months, including the displacement of over 11,000 villagers, the shootings of

civilians at point-blank range, the beheading and mutilation of civilians, the shooting of a nine year-old girl, and the continued attacks on Karen civilians in the worst offensive since 1997; calls on the Government and the European Union to condemn these atrocities; urges the Department for International Development to provide urgently-needed humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced people in Eastern Burma through Thai-based relief organisations; calls on the UN Security Council (UNSC) to use its authority to stop the violence against civilians in Eastern Burma and to pass a binding resolution requiring democratic change in Burma; and further calls on the Government to work with UNSC member states to ensure such a resolution is passed as a matter of urgency.

EDM 1773 – Democracy in Belarus – primary sponsor: Gary Streeter MP (tabled 8 March, 2006)

That this House deplores the recent arrests of opposition activists in Belarus who were campaigning for the Presidential elections on 19th March 2006, including the leaders of reputable political parties; notes that this forms part of a wide scale pattern of arrest, intimidation and oppression by forces loyal to President Lukashenko; believes that the international community should apply more pressure on the Government of Belarus to ensure that these elections are free and fair; and looks forward to the day when the 10 million people of this European country can enjoy the freedoms that British people take for granted.

EDM 1126 – Arms Trade Treaty – primary sponsor: John Bercow MP (tabled 28 November 2005)

That this House is dismayed at the continued uncontrolled proliferation of arms around the globe which results in one death every minute, undermines development, fuels conflict and enables criminal activity to flourish; notes that the UK is the second biggest arms exporter in the world and has a

particular responsibility better to control this trade; acknowledges that the development of an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) would ensure all states were bound by better rules governing arms transfers; congratulates the UK Government for its leadership in the promotion of such a treaty, which now has the support of over 40 countries across the world; further notes the Government's intention to begin negotiations for an ATT within the UN General Assembly during 2006; and calls on all hon. Members to use every chance to promote the ATT over the coming months, particularly with their international counterparts, in order to ensure that next year's historic opportunity is not missed and that negotiations begin.

EDM 1034 – Arrest of Dr Kiiza Besigye in Uganda – primary sponsor: Gary Streeter MP (tabled 15 November 2005)

That this House notes with concern that Dr Kiiza Besigye, President of the Forum for Democratic Change, was arrested by the Ugandan Government in Kampala on 14th November, during a nationwide tour in which he was receiving substantial support; observes that many Ugandans believe this move to have been politically motivated in the run-up to next year's presidential elections; calls upon the Ugandan Government to release Dr Besigye and to allow free and fair elections to take place in 2006; and calls upon the UK Government to use its best endeavours to ensure that democracy and the rule of law are respected within this valued member of the Commonwealth.

EDM 838 – Provision of Fair Trial Guarantees in the Maldives – primary sponsor: Gary Streeter MP (tabled 24 October 2005)

That this House reiterates its support for democratic reform in the Maldives; is deeply concerned about the detention of Mohamed Nasheed, Chairperson of the Maldivian Democratic Party, on charges of terrorism and treason; notes that Mohamed Nasheed was

recognised as a political refugee by the British Government in April 2004 and voluntarily returned to the Maldives in May 2005; acknowledges assurances by the Government of Maldives that Mohamed Nasheed will be afforded a fair trial; observes that Sir Ivan Lawrence QC has highlighted the lack of judicial independence in the Maldives and has recommended the appointment of an expatriate judge through the Commonwealth Secretariat; and calls upon the UK Government urgently to facilitate the implementation of Sir Ivan's recommendations.

Members have sponsored EDMs on human trafficking, Sudan, Nepal, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe and a variety of other issues.

Protests

Belarus – Between 20-30 members and supporters of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission protested outside the Belarusian Embassy in London on 20 March, and Gary Streeter MP attempted to present a letter, but Embassy staff refused to open the doors.

Burma – members of the Commission have participated in two protests at the Burmese Embassy organised by the Burmese community in exile. At a protest on 19 June to mark Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's 61st birthday, John Bercow MP spoke and signed a birthday card for Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains in house arrest.

Other Activities

Members of the Commission have contributed various articles to the media on human rights issues, and have written regularly on these themes for the website www.conservativehome.com

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Commission have met with a variety of organisations and individuals privately, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Freedom House, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Friends of the Maldives and others.

Charm Tong, a visiting dissident from Burma, had private meetings with the Leader of the Conservative Party, the Rt Hon David Cameron MP, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon William Hague MP and the Shadow Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell MP.

On the 18th anniversary of the establishment of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Burma, both William Hague and Gary Streeter sent letters of support and solidarity to the NLD. In his letter to the NLD, Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague wrote: "You and your members have shown extraordinary courage and commitment over the past 18 years, in the face of appallingly repressive treatment, to keep alive the vision of a democratic, peaceful Burma, in which the human rights of all the people of Burma are respected.... We will continue to urge the British Government to be active in support of a better future for the people of Burma."

The Commission invited Burma's democracy leader, Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, to address the Conservative Party Conference in Bournemouth in 2006, but she remains under house arrest. However, the Commission arranged for Zoya Phan, a Karen activist from Burma, to address the Conservative Party Conference, immediately before William Hague. She received a standing ovation.

The Commission held a fringe meeting at the Conservative Party Conference in 2006, with the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray, the Director of Amnesty International UK Kate Allen, the former Prime Minister of Mongolia Elbegdorj Tsakhia, and the President of the Forum for Democratic Change in Uganda, Dr Kizza Besigye, on the theme "Freedom & Human Rights At the Heart of Foreign Policy – What Does It Mean?" ■

Country Reports

Belarus

Belarus has been described as “the last dictatorship in Europe”. Alexander Lukashenko’s destruction of pluralist politics and disregard for human rights was brought sharply into focus for the presidential “election” of March 2006. Firstly, the election was brought forward by three months, for the second time, in order, it is thought, to deny the opposition time to build up a profile in the country. The pre-election period was punctuated by multiple arrests of opposition figures and by the shooting at a car in which an opposition presidential candidate, Alexander Kazulin, was travelling.



Conservative Human rights Commission leads protest at Belarus embassy

Most of the democratic opposition forces have united into one Congress. They produced a unified candidate in Alexander Milinkievich, a multilingual professor of Physics from the Belarusian Popular Front, the

Conservative Party's sister party, which was one of the major forces for independence in the 1980s. This was in preference to Anatoly Lebedko of the United Civil Party, who was deemed to have too much of a tarnished reputation due to adverse propaganda on state media. Kazulin's Social Democrats are

not part of the unified opposition.

The Central Election Commission gave Lukashenko's official vote share as 82.6%. Such independent polling as existed projected more



Gary Streeter delivers petition to Belarusian embassy

realistic figures of between 47% (requiring a second round) and 63%. Even this, though, should not be taken as evidence that Lukashenko would keep power in a democratic Belarus: democracy requires multiparty participation at all levels, free and independent media and education, and freedom to demonstrate. In reality, opposition voices are never heard by most of the population.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) declared that the election and the election process did not meet required standards for free and fair elections. The European Union (EU) and the USA refused to recognise Lukashenko as a legitimate president. The Foreign Ministry of Russia, whose international campaign against democracy has its origins in Minsk, declared the election perfectly fair and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the West was being unhelpful.

The results triggered demonstrations in October Square in the capital, Minsk. The opposition put the figure of demonstrators at 30,000. The demonstrations were not forcefully broken up in front of the international media – instead, people were arrested in the side streets and at metro stations as they went home. Part of the organisers' problem was the need to come and go for necessities like food, work and sleep. Consignments of food meant for the square had been blocked at the Latvian border before the election. They learnt that lesson from Ukraine. Entrants to the square had rucksacks checked for sleeping bags. No state-owned enterprise granted time off. When the international journalists had gone away, on the Friday after Sunday's elections, the remaining demonstrators were dispersed by force and imprisoned, many were beaten. The following day saw more demonstrations to mark the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. As the demonstrators marched towards the detention centres where their allies were being held, many of them were arrested, including Alexander Kazulin. Kazulin

is still in prison, jailed for five and a half years for hooliganism and organising disturbances.

While the elections, and the ensuing demonstrations and international condemnations failed to loosen Lukashenko's grip on power, they did represent some significant turning points: more demonstrators than ever before appeared on the streets; Government militia members, on an individual level, were less willing to use force than before; prison sentences were short because the authorities were simply running out of prison space and prisons were being overrun; the Government was rumoured to be constrained on the force it could order against the demonstrators, by the West forcing Putin to pressure him not to use it.

The transition from Communism to "democracy" has resulted in few changes for most Belarusians. Most of the structures put in place when Belarus was part of the Soviet Union, in particular the KGB, continue to operate in the country. Government controls extend to most aspects of Belarusian life. Freedom of religion, for example, is still tightly controlled. While the Orthodox Church has some favour with the Government, other religions, including Protestant and Catholic Christians, continue to meet with great difficulty when they attempt to register their organisations, something which is compulsory under Belarusian law. A number of churches have reported receiving hefty fines for "meeting in buildings or locations without official permission to use them for religious purposes." In 2006 at least two Christian leaders were arrested and immediately sentenced to ten days imprisonment, in separate cases, for organising "illegal meetings." According to Belarusian sources, however, an interesting exception to the restrictions on religious freedom are Muslim groups who are apparently building mosques with financial backing from Saudi Arabia. President Lukashenko has actively pursued a close relationship with leaders of rogue states like Iran, Eritrea, Cuba and Venezuela,

so many believe there are political reasons behind the favour shown to Muslim groups.

The Slovakian Pontis Foundation stated after the election that the potential for change was being overestimated by the opposition but underestimated by the Government: if this is accurate, Belarus may still have a chance. For now, it remains one of the most repressive regimes in the world.

Burma

Burma is ruled by one of the world's most brutal military dictatorships, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). This regime is the latest in a succession of military juntas which have ruled Burma since General Ne Win seized power in a *coup d'etat* in 1962. It is an illegal regime, because in 1990 it held elections, which were overwhelmingly won by the National League for Democracy (NLD). However, despite the NLD winning 82 per cent of the parliamentary seats, the regime rejected the results, imprisoned the victors and intensified its grip on power.

The NLD leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. Despite a visit to Rangoon by United Nations Under Secretary-



Burma's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi



*Burned-out village in Burma
(photo provided by Free Burma Rangers)*

General Ibrahim Gambari, in May 2006, her period of house arrest has been extended for another year. She has now spent a total of over 11 years under house arrest.

In addition to the detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, over 1,100 prisoners of conscience remain in jail, subjected to horrific forms of torture. Examples of torture have been extensively documented by organisations such as the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma (AAPPB). The most recent AAPPB report on torture, *The Darkness We See*, published in December 2005, presents detailed accounts of different forms of torture used. Another report, *Eight Seconds of Silence*, documents the deaths of at least nine political prisoners since 2005 alone. On 27 September 2006, the 18th anniversary of the establishment of the NLD, several leading Burmese dissidents were arrested, including Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi and Htay Kywe. They had previously served 15 years in prison.

The SPDC is also accused of perpetrating attempted genocide and crimes against humanity against the ethnic nationality groups in Burma. There are eight major ethnic groups – the Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon in eastern Burma, the Kachin in northern Burma, and the Chin, Rakhine (or Arakan) and Rohingya in western Burma. In eastern Burma alone, over 2,800 villages have been destroyed or forcibly relocated since 1996, and over a million people have been internally displaced. Some of the Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

are on the run, in the jungle, without food, medicine or shelter. Others have built temporary shelters having fled their own villages during attacks by the SPDC. Others have been forced to move to relocation camps under the control of the military.

Over 155,000 people have fled Burma to refugee camps in Thailand. Thousands more have sought refuge in India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, the United States, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Europe.

Evidence continues to be reported of the widespread, systematic use of rape as a weapon of war. It has been documented in reports such as *Licence to Rape* (Shan Women's Action Network), *Shattering Silences* (Karen Women's Organisation) and most recently *Hidden Crimes Against Chin Women* (Women's League of Chinland). Sexual slavery is documented in *Catwalk to the Barracks* (Women and Child Rights Project – South Burma, in collaboration with the Human Rights Foundation of Monland).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and others continue to report the widespread use of forced labour and forced portering. There is also well-documented evidence of the use of human minesweepers. Human Rights Watch has reported that Burma has the highest number of forcibly conscripted child soldiers in the world, with over 70,000 children forced to join the Burma Army.

Burma continues to be ranked by the US State Department as one of the world's worst violators of religious freedom. Christians, particularly among the Karen, Chin and Kachin ethnic groups, face discrimination, restrictions and violations. In Chin State, Christians have been forced to destroy crosses and replace them with Buddhist pagodas. Muslims, particularly among the Rohingya, face severe violations, including denial of citizenship rights. Although the SPDC uses Buddhism to support its activities and stir up national sentiment, Buddhist opponents of the regime are treated brutally, as is

documented in the AAPPB's report *Burma: A Land Where Buddhist Monks Are Disrobed and Detained in Dungeons*.

In 2006, the Burma Army launched its biggest and worst offensive against the Karen people since 1997. In the first half of 2006, over 20,000 Karen civilians were displaced. Thousands fled to the Thai border, but many thousands are trapped in the jungle, hunted by the military. The Free Burma Rangers and the Karen Human Rights Group have reported terrible atrocities, including beheadings, severe mutilations and the shooting of a nine year-old girl after her father and grandmother were killed. The victims have been unarmed, innocent civilians.

Human trafficking is a major issue in Burma, particularly in Kachin State. The Kachin Women's Association – Thailand (KWAT) published a report, *Driven Away*, which documents 63 cases involving 85 women and girls, mostly aged between 14 and 20. The women and girls were sold throughout China as wives or prostitutes. Some were taken as far away as the North Korea-China border.

The humanitarian crisis in Burma continues to deteriorate. A new report, *Chronic Emergency: Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma*, published in September 2006 by the Backpack Health Worker Team, presents evidence that the public health crisis, caused by the regime's lack of investment in health care and its violations of human rights, is as bad as the poorest countries in Africa – and yet Burma receives only a fraction of the aid and attention given to Africa. Malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS have reached epidemic proportions. Infant mortality rates and deaths from treatable diseases are among the worst in the world. Yet Burma's regime, which spends over 40% of its budget on the military, invests less than US\$1 per person per year in health and education combined. In the World Health Organisation's *assessment of health care*, Burma is ranked 190 out of 191 states. Only Sierra Leone has a worse record of caring for its citizens.

The major political focus of 2005-6 has been on the campaign to bring the issue of Burma to the agenda of the UN Security Council. In September 2005, a report written by an international law firm, DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary, commissioned by former Czech President Vaclav Havel and Nobel Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu, was published. The report, *Threat to the Peace*, assessed the legal case for bringing Burma to the UN Security Council agenda, and concluded that Burma meets all the major criteria for such action. The United Kingdom is supporting the initiative, and the issue has been raised in various ways in Parliament, including regularly by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission. In September 2006, the UN Security Council voted to put the issue of Burma onto its formal agenda for the first time, and a discussion was held. There is now a need to pass a binding resolution on Burma.

In addition to urging the United Kingdom to increase its efforts to secure a binding resolution at the UN Security Council, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission calls on Her Majesty's Government to provide funding to exiled

*A child's drawing of violations in Burma
(picture provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide)*



Burmese pro-democracy and human rights documentation, dissemination and education projects, and emergency humanitarian aid to the IDPs. We urge the United Kingdom to introduce a ban on investment in Burma, and to investigate allegations of crimes against humanity and attempted genocide and consider bringing the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

For more information including evidence presented at the hearing on Burma, see www.conservativehumanrights.com

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the civil war that has ravaged the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for ten years, some four million lives have been lost. Despite such a bleak backdrop, the country's first democratic elections were held this year, significantly advancing political rights and bringing much promise.

The election represents a major step forward in the DRC's transition to democracy. However, reports of the dumping of ballot papers present grounds for concerns and demand further scrutiny by the United Nations Mission in the DRC (MONUC).

Photograph © EC/Echo/François Goemans



Photograph © EC/Echo/François Goemans

The humanitarian situation in the DRC over the past year brings cause for great alarm. In April 2006, fighting between the national army and Mayi-Mayi militiamen in the Katanga province led to what the International Medical Corps described as "severe adult and child malnutrition." Threats to basic needs of food, water, sanitation and healthcare remain omnipresent as the instability of the region continues to be fought out.

There is overwhelming evidence of the continuing widespread abuse of human rights in the DRC. The All Party Parliamentary Group for the Great Lakes and Genocide Prevention visited the DRC in 2006 and were most concerned by evidence of sexual violence towards women. The group recorded distressing testimonies of heinous acts of sexual abuse and visited a hospital dealing with the effects of rape and mutilation: the oldest patient was 75, and the youngest patient was just four years old. The scale of these crimes is not known, but they are thought to be manifest throughout the country, affecting hundreds of thousands of women and children.

The plight of Congolese children ought to serve as a constant call to action for the rest of the world. They are victims of killing, abuse, rape, accusations of witchcraft, coercion into militia gangs and abandonment to the hostile streets, ensuring misery for tens of thousands of innocent children, many without the comfort or guidance of older loved ones. In Kinshasa alone, there are an estimated 30,000 children living on the streets. Furthermore, the continuing abuse of children seals this fundamental societal breakdown into a repetitive cycle for generations to come.

Cuba

Cuba is ruled by a Communist dictator, Fidel Castro, whose regime is ranked by Freedom House as one of the eight most oppressive regimes in the world. Cubans have no right to freedom of expression, politics, religion, movement or assembly, and Castro ensures all political and economic powers remain centralised in his hands. The last elections to the National Assembly were in 2002, when 609 candidates competed for 609 seats. It is impossible to hold any Government position without being a member of the Communist Party and adhering to its belief in atheism. This means that any person holding religious beliefs is effectively barred from any Government employment. Cubans who do not belong to the Communist Party suffer routine discrimination in all aspects of their life as they are considered to be 'untrustworthy'.

Castro's control also covers the politicised judiciary, which tries dissidents for crimes such as 'spreading unauthorised news' and 'dangerousness'. Sentences of up to twenty years are given for supplying 'subversive' information, including texts on democracy. In July 2005, one Cuban group published a list of 306 dissidents currently in prison. Dissidents are commonly accused of being US agents, and the Cuban regime has stepped up campaigns of slander against them.

In March 2003 the Government carried out a crackdown against political opposition. In a

series of one-day show trials, 75 people were sentenced to on average twenty years in prison. While a few have been released, mostly due to health reasons, the Cuban Government has continued to arrest and imprison human rights and democracy activists across the country. Human rights groups put the total number of political prisoners in Cuba at around 300. The Cuban Government also utilises 'acts of repudiation', which are meant to be spontaneous verbal and sometimes physical attacks on Cubans who have fallen into disfavour. All evidence, however, indicates that these are actually carefully orchestrated events, often with people who have been bussed in from outside the community. One Presbyterian pastor who made public calls for more respect for religious freedom stated that Cuban officials told him, in a thinly veiled death threat, that they could "not be responsible for any actions of the people." He has since been forced to flee the country. Opposition groups are still active however, with more than 100 people attending the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba in May 2005.

The totalitarian nature of Cuban communism is still very much in evidence. So-called "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution" encourage neighbours to inform on each other for pro-opposition activity or sympathy, or any activity regarded as 'un-revolutionary'. In schools and universities, even many science courses are required to contain pro-Communist content. Journalists are still held without trial for up to four years. Some courses of study, including

*A Cuban street
(photo provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide)*



journalism and diplomacy, are still closed to Cubans who do not belong to the Communist Party. In 2003, 10 people working for 'independent libraries' were sentenced to up to 26 years in jail.

Any Cuban wishing to travel abroad must obtain Governmental permission first, which is often denied without explanation. Those permitted to travel abroad frequently have to leave their children behind, who are effectively held hostage by the state to ensure their parents' return. Cubans also must seek official permission to travel within the country, for example from province to province.

Castro's economic control over his people's lives has also increased in recent years. Many of the reform measures his regime was forced to make in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union have been scrapped, as oil subsidies have begun to flow from Cuba's new closest ally, Venezuela. China and Spain have also made major investments in the Cuban nickel industry. While tourism has also pumped much needed foreign currency into the economy, this industry is still tightly controlled by the military, under the leadership of Raul Castro. The Cuban Government, however, discourages interaction between Cubans and foreign tourists. Ordinary Cubans are barred from entering popular holiday resorts like Varadero and are also systematically prohibited from entering bars, hotels and restaurants that are popular with tourists in the major tourist centres, like Havana.

In early 2005, under strong pressure from Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero, the EU suspended the sanctions it had imposed on Cuba after the 2003 crackdown. This move came despite strong opposition from a number of former Communist countries, especially the Czech Republic. The Czechs, who have tried to hold receptions for dissident groups in their embassy in Havana, continue to have frosty relations with Cuba. In May 2005, Czech Senator Karel Schwarzenberg was expelled for trying to



Former prisoner Pastor Lamelas – released in June 2006

meet with dissidents. The US has also attempted to intensify pressure on Cuba by increasing pro-democratic broadcasting and limiting the amounts of currency that can be taken into the country.

According to a 2006 US State Department report, Cuba is a "country of serious concern" for trafficking in people, along with countries such as North Korea and Venezuela. Sexual trafficking, child prostitution and sexual exploitation in general are serious problems. The report said that, "Cuba does not fully comply with international minimum standards to eliminate trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so." The regime does not tolerate any NGOs working independently of the state, and there has been no known Government effort to aid a single victim of trafficking, no prosecutions of officials involved, and no information campaign on the issue.

Despite the very serious nature of human rights abuse in Cuba, repression in the country still receives disproportionately little coverage in much of the British press. This year, the *Guardian's* Richard Gott felt able to describe Castro as "one of the great figures of the twentieth century."

Eritrea

The Eritrean Government continues to exercise tyrannical rule through the use of state-sponsored force and it is clear that this has become increasingly the case since 2001. The Eritrean Government continues to justify its repressive regime and policies, using the ongoing border dispute with Ethiopia as its excuse.

The Government of Eritrea has isolated itself and its people from the outside world by expelling key Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and hindering the efforts of the United Nations to monitor troop movements along the disputed border. The ruling party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), persists with its policy of not allowing domestic or international human rights organisations to work in Eritrea.

The PFDJ continues to be the only party allowed to exist. Eritrea won its independence from Ethiopia in 1993 and since that time there have been no national elections. There have been regional elections, but the candidates have all come from the ruling PFDJ party.

The Eritrean Constitution written in 1997 has not been implemented, with important provisions for human rights being ignored. These provisions include Article 19, which allows for freedom of conscience, religion, movement, assembly, organisation and expression; and Article 17, which stipulates the right to a fair and public trial, the presumption of innocence and the right of appeal.

The Government of Eritrea continues to arrest citizens for expressing opposing views, practising an unregistered religion, attempting to leave the country or avoiding military conscription. Members of the independent media arrested in 2001 continue to be detained without trial by the state, as do several prominent but dissenting members of the ruling party who were also

jailed in 2001. Those arrested are denied legal representation, and they are neither formally charged nor brought to trial.

Those held in prison by the Eritrean Government are kept in secretive prisons, where conditions are horrendous. There are widespread reports that the conditions are exacerbated by the large number of prisoners. There are widespread accounts of the continuing use of torture in the form of psychological abuse, solitary confinement and physical torture.

The repression of religious liberty continues to be a significant issue in Eritrea. The PFDJ view religious groups as potentially unpatriotic. The Government continues to persecute all religious establishments not affiliated with the Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Eritrean Evangelical (Lutheran) churches and Sunni Muslim mosques. Followers of other churches are often arrested for possession of a Bible or for attending a shared worship meeting. However, authorised churches are not exempt from persecution. The Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church was forced out of office and officially placed under house arrest in January 2006 as a result of his increasingly critical views on Government interference in church affairs.

Ethiopia

Serious human rights abuses continue to be perpetrated in Ethiopia, despite the international community's optimism following Ethiopia's landmark parliamentary elections in May 2005. The period preceding these elections saw demonstrations and political debate, which had not previously been witnessed in Ethiopia.

The elections saw the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) win a third consecutive five-year term. However, the opposition parties refused to accept the declared results, and in November the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) called for civil defiance, which resulted in extensive riots and unwarranted use of force by the police and military. This use of force has characterised the Government's response to the elections in that it has stepped up its campaign of repression and brutality to suppress and chastise any form of political opposition. This threatens the progress that the May elections appeared to have brought about.

The Government continues to enforce a ban on public assemblies which has led to



Photograph © EC/Echo/Christophe Reltien

protests, with state forces again responding with excessive force. The state continues to arrest opposition supporters. These arrests have included opposition politicians, leading journalists, editors and campaigners. The Ethiopian Government has indicated that those arrested could be tried for treason, an offence which carries the death penalty under Ethiopian legislation. The Ministry of Information has continued its policy of revoking the licences of journalists who work for foreign media agencies such as Voice of America and Radio Deutsche-Welle because of their critical reporting.

The Ethiopian Government continues to exaggerate concerns about insurgency and terrorism to excuse its policy of torturing and imprisoning those suspected of opposing the state. This policy is also maintained against students, as a result of the student protests at Addis Ababa University in 2004.

The Ethiopian Government has continued to protect the military and police authorities who are responsible for atrocities and crimes such as those committed against the people of Gambella in the south-western region of Ethiopia, the Oromia and Amhara regions. The Government continues to refuse to investigate reports of human rights abuses which may amount to crimes against humanity.

The Government of Ethiopia continues its repression of members of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), which is the country's only domestic human rights organisation. Employees are persistently subjected to harassment, threats and coercion by state officials and agencies.

Dalits in India

India's Dalits and tribals are the most numerous victims of caste discrimination, which adversely affects hundreds of millions not only in South Asia, but around the world. In India, Dalits number at least 160 million,¹ while a similar social stigma is attached to the 70 million-strong tribal population. Caste discrimination continues to be reported on a vast scale not only among Hindu communities but all religious groupings in India.

The manifestations of caste discrimination are various. Violent attacks against Dalits occur on a huge scale, and it is estimated that only a small proportion are reported. These have included murders, rapes, arson and bodily mutilations. Human rights defenders have also been targeted: for example, in January 2006 it was reported that Mr Bant Singh, a Dalit from Burj Jhabbar village in Punjab, was attacked by seven 'upper-caste' men wielding iron bars. His hands and left leg were amputated as a result. This was a revenge attack for the stand taken by Mr Singh following the rape of his daughter in 2002, which ensured the imprisonment of three 'upper-caste' villagers. Dalits in positions of authority are often vulnerable to attack: on 17 June 2006, Indira Kushwaha, a Dalit woman who is the head of Mahoikala village, Madhya Pradesh, was beaten by armed men and paraded naked through her village after she refused to hand over Rs. 50,000 (£570) from the village's development fund. Dalits are also widely excluded from religious activities: on 13 December 2005, four Dalit women were assaulted and fined after entering a temple in Keraragarh village, Orissa.

Dalits are also consistently the chief victims of the most severe human rights abuses in India. The problem of human trafficking is most acute among Dalits: according to a survey reported in *The Times of India* on 20 February 2006, approximately 98% of girls being trafficked in India belong to the



Dalit woman
Photograph by Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Dalits, 'lower castes' and minorities (many of whom are of Dalit background). The report also implicated Nepal in the trafficking of the 'lower-castes'. Child bonded labour, a significant human rights problem in India, is most common among Dalits. Poverty is rife among Dalits, with an estimated 70% living below the poverty line. Dalit women are perhaps the most downtrodden of all, with very limited access to education and an extremely low literacy rate. Each year, thousands are the victims of sexual violence committed with impunity. Dalits often live in segregation from other castes.

Dalits and tribals are also the chief victims of the widespread religious persecution and discrimination in India; some religious minority groups stress that infringements of religious freedom constitute a means for containing Dalits within the caste system. Infringements include both religiously-motivated violence and legislative obstacles to religious freedom.

¹ This figure is taken from the 2001 Census; given India's continued population growth, the figure today is estimated to be closer to 180 million.



Village Dalits
Photograph by Christian Solidarity Worldwide

India's reservation policy, a system designed to tackle the socio-economic backwardness of Dalits by guaranteeing quotas for Dalits in parts of the public sector, is not available to Christians and Muslims of Dalit background, despite the recommendations of various Government commissions. This constitutes an obstacle to the religious freedom of would-be Dalit converts to Islam or Christianity.

Anti-conversion legislation, in place in six states, also adversely affects the religious freedom of Dalits. Laws in four Indian states stipulate more severe punishments for those prosecuted for converting Dalits, tribals, women or children. The Rajasthan state Government passed an anti-conversion law

in April, and the Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat state Governments have each passed amendments to their respective anti-conversion laws, making them more stringent. Each of these is currently pending ratification. Anti-conversion legislation also appears to be linked to promoting a culture of violence by lending legitimacy to the accusations of Hindu extremist attackers.

Religious violence often takes the same forms as other violence against Dalits. Among the most heinous examples from 2006 was the gang-rape of two women (one of whom was seven months pregnant) in Nadia village, Madhya Pradesh, which reportedly occurred at the instigation of a village leader after the women's husbands refused to surrender their Christian faith. Impunity for perpetrators of religious violence is a recurrent theme, and in some cases police have been directly involved in attacks on religious minorities, or in failing to register cases. On 16 January in Matiapada village, Orissa, tribal Christians suffered an arson attack on their houses, allegedly led by the village leader who escaped punishment; instead, the Christians were imprisoned for nine days under the state anti-conversion law.

The international campaign for Dalit emancipation includes providing a political voice, economic development, targeted aid, education and religious freedom. The economic advancement of Dalits is being promoted internationally, particularly through encouraging foreign investors to take measures to address caste discrimination. The plight of the Dalits is starting to receive more international political attention: for example, a hearing on caste discrimination was held by the Human Rights Subcommittee of the US House of Representatives Committee on International Relations in October 2005, and the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is planning a hearing with significant Dalit leaders in early 2007.

Iran

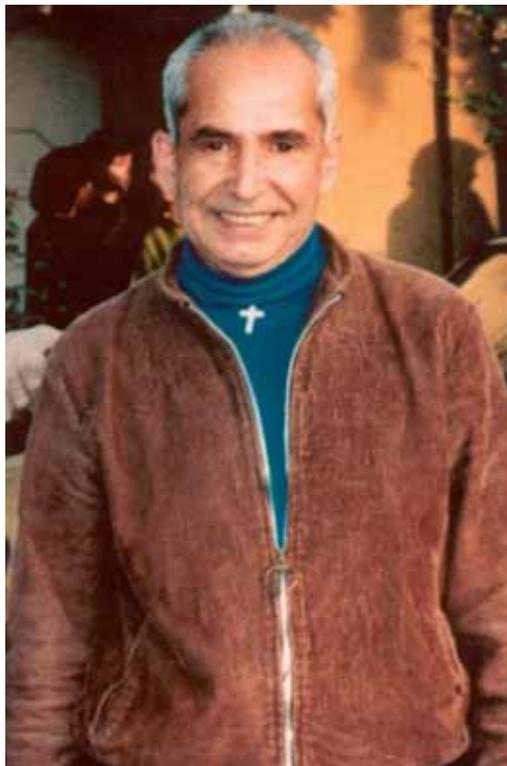
The system of totalitarian Islam that rules Iran has become more entrenched over the last year, as many of the relative freedoms introduced between 1997 and 2000 have been abolished by the regime.

Iranian elections are not democratic. Under the country's complex Islamic system, all candidates must be approved by the clerics who make up the Council of Guardians. The clerics themselves are unelected, and half are selected by the Supreme Leader. Although a relatively reformist coalition under Mohammed Khatami was allowed to emerge in 1997, the social liberalisation this coalition brought about prompted a backlash by conservative clerics. Khatami failed to press ahead with reforms after 2000, and the clerical establishment set about closing over 100 newspapers and jailing hundreds of opponents. Many Iranians then gave up hope of reform. The Council of Guardians' sweeping vetoes of reformist candidacies and very low electoral turnout saw a massive consolidation of power by hardliners in municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections in 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively, culminating in the inauguration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President.

On coming to power, Ahmadinejad appointed a new Interior Minister, Mustafa Pour-Mohammadi, and Information Minister, Gholamhussein Mohseni Ezhei. Mohseni Ezhei is believed to have ordered the murder of dissident Pirouz Davani in 1998; Pour-Mohammadi is responsible for some of the most egregious human rights violations since the creation of the Islamic republic. In 1988, Pour-Mohammadi sat on a three-man panel that ordered the extra-judicial execution of at least 2,800 people in a purge of Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MeK) members in Iran's jails. At the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the MeK had attempted to overthrow the regime from its bases in Iraq, although the vast majority of prisoners were already in jail at the time and could not have played any part in the incursion.

The Islamic regime maintains control through fear. A system of 'parallel institutions', including illegal interrogation centres and secret jails is run throughout Iran. Freedom of speech has worsened since hardliners re-enforced control, as has the treatment of detainees, including through the use of torture, according to a leaked Iranian Government report in summer 2005. Numerous dissidents have died under torture, including Canadian-Iranian photographer Zahra Kazemi in June 2003. In June this year Iran made its contempt for human rights clear. Saeed Mortazavi, a serious violator and the former prosecutor-general in charge of Kazemi while she was in custody, was a member of Iran's delegation to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews are prevented from entering many positions and face discriminatory restrictions in many spheres of life, including property, education and work. Baha'is, who at 320,000 constitute the largest non-Muslim group, are



*Mehdi Dibaj – a Christian martyr in Iran
Photograph by Elam*

particularly persecuted. Although the Sunni minorities, from Turkmen, Arab or Kurdish communities, have traditionally been allowed some degree of cultural expression, this appears to be under threat: at least fifty were shot dead in protests last year in Khuzistan over state-planned Persian migration into the province. Kurds are severely repressed. In July 2005, security police murdered Kurdish activist Shivan Qadevi and are believed to have publicly dragged his body behind their vehicle.

The Ministry of Culture controls all domestic radio and television broadcasts, and its prior approval is required for the publication of any book. Access to websites which are "immoral and insult the country's religious leaders" is blocked. This is typical of the Islamic regime's bleeding together immorality and freedom. Aside from those newspapers whose publication has been halted, there is now a great deal of journalistic self-censorship, especially to avoid "offending Islam".

Islam is the official religion, with Ja'fari Shi'ism as the chosen doctrine. According to Article 168 of Iran's Constitution, the judiciary functions "in accordance with the criteria of Islam". Article 167 allows for judges to deliver verdicts "on the basis of authoritative Islamic sources and authentic fatawa" in the absence of any relevant legislation in codified law: hence the use of Shari'ah law in punishing apostates with death, granting greater value to male testimony and Muslim testimony and forbidding the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man. A woman's testimony in court is worth half that of a man, women are separated from men in most public places and they must adhere to strict codes of dress, often violently enforced by the 'Basij' vice police. In recent years numerous victims of rape have been put to death for committing adultery, including a 16 year-old girl in 2003 who was a victim of familial sexual abuse from a young age. In the last

year, homosexual teenagers were publicly hanged from cranes. Two other young offenders, both sentenced when still children, were due to hang in 2006 but were given a last minute reprieve.

Many senior clerics are hugely rich, heading monopolies that control large swathes of the economy and are tax-exempt. Iran is a US State Department "country of serious concern" for human trafficking.

Iranian internal politics and the resurgence of its hardline clerics are potentially pivotal for the security of the region. Ahmadinejad's stated desire to "wipe Israel off the map" and his claim that Iran is "ready to transfer nuclear know-how to Islamic countries" indicate the Iranian regime's increasingly dangerous tactics. The progress of freedom in Iran in the coming years is likely to have a telling effect on regional and global security.

The Maldives

The Maldives has been ruled by an authoritarian dictator, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, since 1978. Until 2005, no opposition political groups were permitted to function and no dissent was tolerated. In the past year, however, the Government has published a *Roadmap to Reform*, with the stated intention of holding multi-party elections in 2008. In June 2005 political parties were permitted to be established, and the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) was registered. The Maldives is, according to the Chief Government Spokesman, "a nation in transition". In September 2006, the Maldives signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Optional Protocol, without reserving on any article. A group of reformers known as the 'New Maldives' faction was promoted in 2005 to key ministerial positions.

While the rhetoric of reform has increased, and the space for dissent has opened up considerably, there remain serious human rights concerns in the Maldives. The MDP Chairperson, Mohamed Nasheed, was held under house arrest under spurious charges of terrorism and sedition. He was released on 21 September 2006, after calls for his release from the international community including the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission. However, the charges against him have not yet been dropped. He and his legal defence team had not been informed of the evidence presented by the prosecution, and were denied adequate time to prepare defence. Independent international observers did not believe he would receive a fair trial. A human rights defender, Jennifer Latheef, was charged with terrorism for allegedly throwing a stone during a protest, and sentenced to 10 years in jail in October 2005. She spent several months under house arrest, and was released in August 2006 after a Presidential 'pardon'.

Police violence and arbitrary arrests continue. In January 2006, 25 people were injured in Fares-Maathodaa Island when the



The Maldives (photo by Benedict Rogers)

police fired tear gas into the crowd and beat up protestors, including women and children. In May, members of an international press freedom delegation were manhandled by police during an event in Male on World Press Freedom Day. Later the same month, a BBC crew reporting on a demonstration outside the court where Mohamed Nasheed's trial was taking place was sprayed with pepper gas by the police. The police have broken up several street protests violently and arbitrarily detained protestors.

On 29 August 2006, according to Minivan News, police raided the home of a prominent MDP member, Abdullah Wasseem (Faseeh). He was 'cuffed at the wrists and ankles and dragged away by the police,' according to news reports, in a 'heavy-handed' police raid. His aunt and a neighbour tried to intervene but were thrown to the floor by the police. The neighbour's son said she was kicked in the stomach. Both women were hospitalised due to a severe reaction to the pepper spray used by the police.

Although the Government has said it will introduce new legislation guaranteeing press freedom, Article 19, an international press



Ben Rogers with Jennifer Latheef

freedom organisation, has expressed deep concern that the draft Press Freedom Bill does not provide adequate protection for journalists. In 2006, several journalists have been arrested and in some cases falsely charged with crimes they had not committed.

In June 2006 the Majlis (Parliament) announced it would put the question of the future political system – whether to adopt a presidential or parliamentary system – to a national referendum. However, concern has been expressed that the referendum may not be entirely free and fair. It is important that the international community monitor this.

On 8 August 2006, the Human Rights Commission Act was passed unanimously by the Majlis, giving the new Human Rights Commission in the Maldives power to visit prisons and detention centres unannounced. Government officials and police will face dismissal if they fail to comply with the Human Rights Commission's summons and demands for information.

Serious allegations have been made against the Commissioner of Police, Adam Zahir. He is accused of sending intimidating, foul-mouthed and threatening emails to

Maldivian dissidents in the UK. The British police investigated the allegations and issued Adam Zahir's wife a warning. The messages were reportedly sent from her e-mail address.

In May 2006 the Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission made a fact-finding visit to the Maldives, and met with Government Ministers, MDP representatives, journalists and Non-Governmental Organisations. The visit included meetings with detained MDP leader Mohamed Nasheed and Amnesty International prisoner of conscience Jennifer Latheef. The Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission addressed an audience of Maldives Police Force on the theme of human rights, and a conference organised by Minivan Radio consisting primarily of pro-democracy groups. A full report of the visit was published and is available on our website. Both the Government and the MDP warmly welcomed the report and accepted the recommendations, and the Government has implemented several of the key recommendations, including the release of Mohamed Nasheed and Jennifer Latheef. The Commission will maintain a dialogue with the Government and the MDP to try to encourage further reform, improvements in human rights and the development of a free press and a multi-party democracy.

Nepal

In 2001, King Gyanendra took power after the massacre of the royal family. He succeeded the much respected King Birendra. Despite Maoist activity since 1996 in Nepal, the actions of the new King in 2005 further worsened the human rights situation. The army and the Maoists are both responsible for abuses against Nepalis, with the army believed to be armed by China.

The turmoil of 2005 – 2006

The human rights situation during 2005 – 2006 in Nepal has reached a new nadir. King Gyanendra staged a *coup d'état* on 1 February 2005. Although the state of emergency was lifted in April 2005, civil and political rights were curtailed, including freedom of movement and assembly, resulting in the arrests of all the political party leaders.

The Maoist insurgents declared a unilateral ceasefire in September 2005, which was abandoned in January 2006. A UN Human Rights Office has been established. Whilst this allows UN monitoring, there has been no improvement in the situation for displaced Bhutanese and Tibetan refugees who are prevented from registering their organisations with the Government (all NGOs have to register). Following the resumption of violence in January, restrictions on press freedom and the detention of human rights activists and students increased. During the spring of 2006 violence reigned in Nepal, with riots

Nepal: photograph by Serpentine Photography



Nepal: photograph by Serpentine Photography

and civil disturbance, including calls from the Maoists for a general strike. Although the majority of the populace complied with this general strike, there were reports at the time which indicated that the motivation was fear of Maoist reprisals in the more urban areas. Nepal is largely made up of a population of rural poor. The opportunities for education, particularly of girls, are extremely limited. These factors acted in combination with internal repression to motivate support for the insurgency.

In May 2006, the King reinstated parliament together with a new Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, and stated that he would abide by its decisions depriving him of tax raising powers and control of the army. In June 2006, there were meetings between the seven-party alliance of political parties and the King, and civil society has come some way to being restored. The Maoists are also being encouraged to disarm. The *Hindustan Times* has reported that elections will take place within the next year.

Current Situation

The drafting of a new constitution, to include rights for classes previously discriminated against (Madheshis, Women,

Dalits and Janjatis), is set to promote better health, education and even the possibility of the monarchy being abolished. A referendum on the abolition of the monarchy and a new constitution is expected in 2007.

The situation during the insurgency has led to an increase in human trafficking, estimated to be 7,000 – 10,000 per annum into the sex trade, particularly to India. Thousands of internally displaced people are thought to be working as slave labour. The coalition Government has met the opposition and, although talks have been slow, an accord on human rights looks set to be agreed. The UN now has a four-person team in place. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed Ian Martin as his personal representative to Nepal. He will assist in the peace process after requests from both the Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda. The team will monitor human rights, the new code of conduct during the ceasefire, management of arms and armed personnel of both sides, and electoral observation.

Future Prospects – Is there hope?

The best support that can be given to the newly stabilising Nepal is assistance to the rural economy: by doing so the natural support for the Maoists will reduce. It is hoped that the number of human rights abuses from both the Maoists and the State will abate. Although Nepal joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2004 the majority rural populace lacks the capital to improve farming practices which would allow Nepalis to begin to compete in the world market. Nepal is perhaps fortunate to be a recipient of foreign remittances from expatriot workers. In terms of other economic intervention, the restriction of arms sales to Nepal should continue, and where they are supplied, close monitoring of their use is needed, until human rights are restored.

The advice to the parties to the conflict from Human Rights Watch targets four areas of potential human rights abuses. Civilians



Girl on bus: photo Serpentine Photography

should neither be attacked or used as shields by the Maoists or the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA); vigilante groups must be disbanded and disarmed and members treated humanely; children should not be recruited for military purposes or held in contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; members of the RNA responsible for human rights violations should be brought to justice and tried fairly. The reporting of incidents and monitoring of the situation by the UN and other special representatives will maintain the pressure on all parties to improve the human rights situation in Nepal.

Nepal is the birth place of Buddha, a nirvana to many and a country steeped in tradition. But the return to peace is slow with a populace which has suffered Maoist indoctrination and has a poorly formed view of civil society. The geopolitical significance of Nepal's location between China and India does at least keep the world's attention on this country.

North Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is the most oppressive state in the world today. The Stalinist state is widely regarded as the least free country on earth in each of the areas of politics, media, the economy and religion. There are no independent political, religious, labour or civil society organisations, while the media is under total state control: radios are manufactured with their dials welded to the Government frequency. Pyongyang maintains its rule through intense thought control and enforced ignorance among its people, with perceived crimes against the personality cults of Kim Jong Il and his late father and predecessor Kim Il Sung being especially severely punished.

Kim Jong Il's regime is responsible for a large network of gulags, the widespread use of slave labour, summary public execution and the execution of the children of prisoners, including babies. In the 1990s, state-run agriculture caused a famine that killed millions, while chronic malnutrition still stunts many children's growth. As in the



Photograph © EC/Echo/Javier Menendez Bonilla

Soviet Union in the 1930s, starving people found guilty of stealing from state agricultural cooperatives during periods of famine are publicly executed, often in front of children.

The country's Orwellian state apparatus continues to run every aspect of North Korean people's lives. Kim Jong Il's Government continues to rank the population in a caste-like system determined by loyalty to the regime. Housing in the Potemkin village capital Pyongyang is reserved for those who are perceived to be both 'genetically pure' and loyal to the Government (concepts seen to be linked), with suspect classes and people with physical or mental abnormalities sent to other regions, particularly the North-East. In healthcare, education and employment, an individual's potential is determined by the perceived loyalty of his or her background.

Reports from former prisoners and defectors from the prison administration detail the extreme abuse of human rights. Collective punishment of families for political crimes is common and separate defectors have claimed entire families have been experimentally killed in gas testing chambers for chemical weapons. Numerous independent reports describe other state



Kim Jong Il



The Korean peninsula at night

efforts to 'biologically eradicate' undesirable elements: these include political prisoners undergoing forced abortions and babies born to prisoners being killed at birth in front of their mothers.

Developments in human rights this year have been alarming. In May Pyongyang announced that it would re-implement full state control of food distribution, an ominous return to the policies that were a prime cause of famine. Although the regime had begun to allow some private grain trading, it appears to have become nervous about this small economic freedom and the undermining of state control in the slight economic upturn of recent years. North Korea has asked the World Food Programme to stop all emergency food aid and all



Children suffering from malnutrition
Source South Korea

western food aid organisations to leave, preferring to jeopardise lives than discuss human rights with donors. Torture and public execution continue, often for small offences.

Among refugees from North Korea, forced marriage, human trafficking and sexual slavery are serious risks; still more serious is the risk of forced return, where execution often awaits. Forced return of those caught most often takes place from China. China's official position defines North Korean defectors as illegal immigrants rather than refugees, and it has become increasingly less tolerant of their presence in recent years. The United States has made plans to increase to two hundred the number of North Korean refugees it will allow entry this year. However, the United Kingdom lags behind, having granted entry to only thirty in 2005. South Korea's Sunshine Policy of positive engagement with the North presents serious obstacles to any public condemnation of the human rights abuses taking place in North Korea.

Saudi Arabia

Citizens of Saudi Arabia cannot change their Government democratically, do not have recourse to an independent judiciary or adequate legal representation, and are subject to corporal and capital punishment, torture, discrimination against women and non-Muslims, and restrictions on freedom of movement, expression, assembly and religion. Saudi Arabia was listed as one of the top 20 most repressive societies in the world by Freedom House in September 2006. In November 2005, the US State Department's annual International Religious Freedom Report designated Saudi Arabia as "a country of particular concern" for the second year in a row.

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy that has been ruled by the al Saud family since its unification in 1932. There is no distinction between the executive and legislative branches of Government – King Abdullah bin Abdul al-Aziz Al Saud is also Prime Minister, and all appointments to the Cabinet are by royal decree. Cabinet members are mostly of the Royal Family. Political parties are banned with the only semblance of organised political opposition operating outside the country. The Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura) is composed of a chairman and 120 members appointed by the monarch for four-year terms. It has limited powers and little influence on the decision-making or power structures of the executive. The Council of Ministers passes legislation that becomes law once ratified by royal decree.

The last year, however, has seen a first tentative – though flawed and fragile – step towards democracy. Between February and April 2005, Saudi Arabia held its first ever elections for half of the 600 seats on the country's 178 municipal councils. The eligible electorate, however, consisted of less than 20 per cent of the population: it included male citizens who were at least 21 years old, not serving in the military, and resident in a particular electoral district for

at least 12 months. Officials in the Municipal and Rural Affairs Ministry and the Interior Ministry screened candidates, and all results were subject to final approval from the Government. More than eight months after the final municipal election was held, none of the municipal councils had met. Women were completely excluded from the political process.

The rule of law is regularly flouted by the Saudi regime, with trials frequently falling short of international standards. Secret trials are common, and political opponents of the regime are often detained without charge and held for indefinite periods. In 2001, the Council of Ministers approved a 225-article penal code that bans torture. However, allegations of torture by police and prison officials remain widespread, and access to prisoners by independent human rights and legal organisations is strictly limited.

Saudi Arabia has the third highest number of executions in the world, behind China and Iran. At least 86 men and two women were executed in 2005, almost half of them foreign nationals – more than double the 32 executions of 2004. The vast majority were executed for murder; others were executed for drug offences and armed robbery. The Saudi online news station *alarabiya.net* reported in November 2005, citing Government sources, that at least 126 individuals are on death row for crimes they were found to have committed before the age of 18. Human Rights Watch has received reports of children sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were as young as 13. Defendants in capital cases often do not have legal representation and are not informed of the progress of the proceedings. Amnesty International's 2006 Report expressed concern that some defendants were convicted and sentenced to death solely or largely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture or deception. Sentences of flogging and amputation can be imposed by the judicial and administrative authorities, although



Saudi woman walks outside a polling station in Riyadh

amputation is rare, as a main or additional sentence for a wide range of offences, including in cases involving prisoners of conscience.

The Prosecution and Investigation Department (mabahith) detained

and interrogated human rights defenders during the year. As a condition for their release, the authorities forced activists to pledge to refrain from speaking to the media or human rights organisations and to cease their human rights advocacy. The Government also maintained travel bans on several human rights activists.

Women in the Kingdom continued to suffer from severe discrimination in the workplace, home, and the courts. Women cannot work, study, or travel without explicit permission from a male relative. They are prohibited from driving. While a new labour law passed in 2005 reportedly expands the professional fields where women are eligible for work, they continue to be barred from jobs that are deemed 'not suitable to their nature.' Currently no more than five per cent of Saudi Arabian women are in paid employment. Saudi women are not permitted to serve as lawyers, and the testimony of a man in court is equal to that of two women.

Some progress has been made, however. In January 2005, Saudi state television began using women as newscasters. Education and economic rights for Saudi women have improved. Girls were not permitted to attend school until 1964, but now more than half of the country's university students are female and the Saudi Government has announced plans to increase the number of technical colleges providing vocational training to women. In November 2005, two women became the first females elected to Jeddah's chamber of commerce, a small but

significant step forward for women's leadership in business. In April 2005, the Grand Mufti issued a statement banning the practice of forcing women to marry against their will and called for the imprisonment of those who persisted in such practice. However, cases of forced marriages continued to be reported.

The Committee to Prevent Vice and Promote Virtue, a semi-autonomous religious police force commonly known as the 'Mutawa'een', enforces a strict policy of segregation between men and women and often uses physical punishment to ensure that women meet conservative standards of dress in public. In May 2006, restrictions were imposed on the religious police, withdrawing their right to detain and interrogate suspects. This authority was passed to the police.

Saudi Arabia has a unique status in the Islamic world as the "guardian" of the Hijaz region – the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad and the cradle of Islam – and the faith's two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina. The Government of Saudi Arabia persists in banning all forms of public religious expression other than Wahabism, an extreme puritanical branch of the Hanbadi school of Sunni Islam. Apostasy is punishable by death, as is converting to a religion other than Islam. Members of the Shi'a, Sufi and other non-Sunni communities, as well as non-conforming Sunnis, are subject to Government restrictions on public religious practices and official discrimination. Although the Government officially recognises the right of non-Muslims to worship in private, it does not always respect this right in practice. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) report a continuing pattern of punishment and abuse of non-Muslim foreigners for private religious practice and conclude that freedom of religion does not exist in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia traditionally has one of the most tightly-controlled media environments

in the Middle East. The Ministry of Information appoints and has the power to remove all newspaper editors. The Government provides comprehensive guidelines to newspapers on what they can and cannot publish. Foreign print publications are subject to censorship. The Government has invested heavily in security systems to block access to websites it deems offensive, said to range in subject matter from religion to swimwear.



King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia

The formal transition of power to King Abdullah led to increased discussions of political reform in the Kingdom. In August 2005, Prince Talal bin Abdel-Aziz, a former finance minister and a

half-brother of Abdullah, called for political reform and a constitution in Saudi Arabia. Talal also said that the current Majlis al-Shura should be given additional powers and be turned into a "quasi-legislative" council. These comments reflect a growing number of voices in support of similar proposals within the royal family and more broadly in Saudi society.

In 2003, the Government approved the establishment of the National Human Rights Association (NHRA) to "protect human rights and spread awareness about them... in keeping with the provisions of Islamic law." The NHRA has received 2,000 complaints since it began work in 2004, has 41 members, including 10 women, and has visited prisons and deportation centres. There is concern, however, that it lacks independence, expertise, and determination to investigate and publicise sensitive human rights abuses. It relies on the goodwill of members of the royal family to provide redress.

In September 2005, the Government announced the formation of a Governmental human rights commission, reporting directly to the King, with a remit to bring Saudi Arabia's Government practices into line with human rights standards. A headquarters has been established, and commission officials have attended UN Human Rights Council meetings in Geneva. On 9 May 2006, Saudi Arabia was elected to the new UN Human Rights Council for a period of three years.

In identifying Saudi Arabia as a valuable ally in the 'War on Terror', it is important to maintain pressure on the Kingdom to consolidate and deepen its efforts for political and human rights reform. Certainly the impetus to reform labour laws was an extremely positive outcome of Saudi Arabia's process of admission into the WTO. But Saudi Arabia must seek to generate the long term political will for further reform within its borders and dramatically accelerate its so far hesitant progress towards international standards of human rights. As members of the UNHRC, Saudi Arabia should be held to account for the example that they set on the world stage or risk losing their position.

Sudan

Although nominally governed by a Government of National Unity (GNU), Sudan in reality continues to be ruled by the brutal militant Islamist regime, the National Islamic Front (NIF), also known as the National Congress Party (NCP), which took power in a *coup d'etat* in 1989. The NIF has been waging war against its own people ever since it took power, in what it describes as a 'jihad'. Sudan was ranked first in the Fund for Peace's Failed States Index 2006. Human rights abuses are endemic and the use of torture is widespread. The regime's genocide in Darfur has come to the attention of the international media, but it has carried out similar atrocities in other parts of the country for many years. In Darfur, the regime has sponsored Janjaweed militias which, along with its regular forces, have been deemed guilty of crimes against humanity, including mass killings of civilians and mass rape.

Darfur

The Sudanese army and its Janjaweed militia have been carrying out a devastating campaign of forced Arabisation against African civilians in Darfur since 2003, when a rebellion erupted in this marginalised region. An estimated 300,000-400,000 people have been killed since 2003, and 90

Photograph © EC/Echo/Greta Hopkins



per cent of Darfur's villages have been destroyed. More than two million people are displaced and there is little prospect of them returning home. They are reliant upon humanitarian agencies for assistance. However, humanitarian convoys have come under increasing attack. Oxfam recently closed two outposts as a result of insecurity. Precarious security in the refugee camps is a major concern. In particular, the lack of security patrols at night and for women leaving the camps to collect firewood are a major cause for concern.

Rape, beatings and killing of civilians by the Janjaweed and, to a lesser extent, the rebel forces, remain rife. In July 2006, the Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT) issued the following report, which typifies the increasing atrocities carried out against the women of Darfur by Government forces:

"On 24 July 2006, approximately 25 armed militias, some in army uniform, attacked twenty women outside Kalma internally displaced camp in Nyala, Southern Darfur. The women were attacked whilst they were collecting firewood. The women had gone outside the camp as a collective in the false belief that they would be safe from attack as a group. During the attack, the militias beat the women with the butt of their guns and flogged them before raping seventeen of the women."²

In August 2006, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported that within a five week period more than 200 women had been raped in Kalma Camp alone. The average number of rapes had previously been two to four incidents each month, so the dramatic rise is indicative of the serious escalation in violence throughout the region.³ An additional 200 women and girls reported having been attacked in other ways during the same time period, including being beaten, punched, and kicked by

² *Attack and Rape of 17 Women outside Kalma IDP Camp*, SOAT Press Release, <http://www.soatsudan.org/>, 26 July 2006

³ *Rapes on rise at Sudan's Darfur refugee camp*-IRC, AP/ST, 23 August 2006

assailants who lie in wait as they leave the camp to collect firewood. The situation has become so bad that around 300 women are reported to have convened a meeting in Kalma on 7 August in order to plead for more assistance from the outside world. Attacks had previously been reduced when African Union troops were able to provide the women with armed firewood patrols. However as African Union finances have dwindled, such patrols have been cut back, and since last April the under-resourced force only provided one such patrol for the women of Kalma.

The African Union force in the region is doing an admirable job. However, it lacks capacity and resources. There is an urgent need for a UN force with a peace-enforcement mandate, sufficient numbers and equipment so as to provide effective security for the people of Darfur. However, the NIF is hostile to any UN deployment.

A peace agreement brokered by the African Union in May 2006 exacerbated the violence, as only one rebel group was a signatory to it. Fighting has increased between all factions. Heavy fighting in the north of the region continues. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Sudan, Jan Pronk, has warned that conflict in the region is worse since the deal. The fact that two of the three major rebel groups refused to sign the agreement is a major weakness. In addition, the conflict has spread over the border with Chad.

Eastern Sudan

The low intensity conflict between the Government and the Eastern Front rebel movement, of which the Beja Congress is the biggest group, has been largely ignored. There have been fears that Sudan is on the verge of a new conflict. The pattern is similar to that in Darfur – marginalisation and underdevelopment. The Government of Sudan cannot afford another conflict on the scale of Darfur, particularly as this would



Photograph © EC/Echo/Greta Hopkins

impede the supply of food and raw materials to Khartoum. Eritrea has been a key broker in talks and there is optimism that a peace deal can be reached.

North-South

After 21 years of conflict between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), in which over two million were killed, four million displaced and unknown thousands of people sold into slavery, a fragile peace agreement was signed. Known as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), one year after it was signed it is showing signs of strain. Implementation has been an uphill battle, mainly due to the NIF's machinations. The SPLM is facing significant challenges following the death of John Garang, leader of the SPLM, in July 2005. The SPLM vision has blurred and it has been outmanoeuvred. As a result, the Government of National Unity has not functioned properly.

There remains plenty of scope for the breakdown of the CPA, in particular over the three areas of disputed ownership, the demarcation of the north-south border, and the non-payment by the NIF of sufficient oil revenues to the south. Rebuilding the south is a major project. The UN has criticised the lack of disbursement of donor funds to finance the development of the south.

Other Issues

Sudan has been accused by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan of recruiting child soldiers into the Sudanese army and the Janjaweed.

There is no freedom of speech in Sudan. Demonstrations are ruthlessly suppressed. On 30 August 2006, police in Khartoum beat, tear gassed and detained people who had gathered peacefully to protest against cuts in subsidies on basic goods such as sugar and petrol. Sudanese journalists and media organisations continue to face severe restrictions and harassment.

The treatment of asylum seekers from Sudan, and the use of torture in Sudan are serious causes for concern. The Aegis Trust has produced an excellent report, *Safe as Ghost Houses*, on the use of Ghost Houses in Sudan. This has highlighted the risk to failed Darfuri asylum seekers who are returned to Khartoum.

Photograph © EC/Echo/Greta Hopkins

The international community has stood by for too long while a genocide unfolds in Sudan. The United Nations Security Council introduced Resolution 1674 in 2006, which condemns attacks on civilians, especially women and children, in armed conflicts generally and specifically states that "the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons, and the commission of systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the situations of armed conflict, may constitute a threat to international peace and security, and reaffirms in this regard its readiness to consider such situations and, where necessary, to adopt appropriate steps." The resolution also invites the UN Secretary-General to "take concrete steps to enhance the capacity of the United Nations" to protect civilians. This has become known as the "Responsibility to Protect", and it should be applied to the crisis in Sudan without delay.



Tibet

China's occupation of Tibet began with its invasion in 1950. In 1959 China reneged on a 17-point agreement it had negotiated with the Dalai Lama, and a year later 100,000 people fled Tibet with the Dalai Lama. The country has been subjected to suppression, religious persecution and cultural destruction ever since. Despite promising autonomy to Tibet's Government, China has in fact divided Tibet into regions, two of which have been subsumed into Chinese regions (Kham and Amdo – renamed as parts of Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan). The eastern region (U'sang) was formed in 1965 as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China.

Monasteries have been destroyed and religious freedom is restricted. Only those chosen to enter the remaining monasteries by the authorities can do so. State re-education programmes and state encouragement and support to ethnic Han Chinese to relocate to Tibet have contributed to the decline in traditional Tibetan society.

In 1990 a new period of Tibetan protest began and the number of political prisoners has increased. There are an estimated 150 Tibetan political prisoners according to independent observers, the majority of which are monks and nuns. One of Tibet's most prominent religious leaders, Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, was sentenced to death in 2002 but, after international pressure, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was falsely accused of involvement in a bomb plot. Another monk, Ngawang Phulchung, has been in prison since 1989 for political activities, including printing a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In several incidents, which took place in 2005 and 2006, monks and nuns were arrested following leaflet distribution and poster pasting. In an incident in Sangchu County, Ganan Tibet Autonomous Prefecture ("TAP"), Gansu Province, on 23 May 2005, four Tibetan monks, Jamyang Dhondup, Dhargay Gyatso and two other unidentified



Tibet: photo Serpentine Photography

monks, from Labrang Tashikyil Monastery were arrested on suspicion of pasting bills calling for "freedom in Tibet."

There is no presumption of innocence, often no clear charges are laid and no right to a defence. The following quote sums up the situation in Tibet even today: "Since the Chinese Government perceives demands for independence as a formidable threat to national unity, it sees repression as the only means of dealing with a dissident movement in Tibet that it fears could rapidly grow in strength and scope."⁴

Major steps in 2005 – 2006

In August 2005 China celebrated 40 years of the TAR, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, visited China. In November 2005 the Special Rapporteur on Torture, Dr Manfred Nowak, visited Tibet for the first time, and observed a palpable level of fear amongst prisoners. He concluded that although torture has decreased in use it is still widespread. Methods of torture still in use include: beatings, use of electric shock batons, submersion in pits of sewage, exposure to conditions of extreme heat or cold, deprivation of sleep, food or water, prolonged solitary confinement, denial of medical treatment and hard labour. He was

⁴ *Report on the visit of the Swedish Human Rights Delegation to China and Tibet, 4 October 1994.* (Source: Free Tibet Campaign)



Tibetan child: photo Serpentine Photography

able to carry out an on-site inspection of Drapchi Prison and the recently opened Chushur Prison near Lhasa, and noted his particular concern with sanctions placed on Tibetan monks, including prohibition on prayers and religious worship. He expressed concern that some prisoners are only "allowed outside of their cells for 20 minutes per day" and noted complaints about "the food, the extreme temperatures experienced in the cells during the summer and winter months and a general feeling of weakness due to lack of exercise."

On 15 March 2006, China was voted on to the new UN Human Rights Council. With the opening of The Beijing–Lhasa railway, the Tibetan Plateau has been breached. As a result, there will be an increase in migration and economic development. Tibetans suggest that the railway will bring the end of Tibetan cultural identity.

On 30 September 2006, climbers at the 5000m-high Advance Base Camp (ABC) at Cho Oyo witnessed the attempt by a group of Tibetan refugees to flee from Chinese soldiers. Reports of this incident were slow to emerge but it has been reported that a nun and a small boy were killed; at least ten small

children were arrested by the soldiers and marched through the ABC. Climbers brought this to the attention of the world's press. It is to be hoped that the refugees who did escape (some 30 in number) will have been allowed to continue their journey from Nepal into India. Every year some 3000 people flee from Tibet using this difficult route. They are poorly equipped and desperate to flee, largely to follow a religious education, which is not available to them in Tibet.

The future of the Tibetan people?

When the name of your country no longer appears on the maps of your neighbouring countries and you are referred to as part of China, what hope can there be for change? As China emerges as an international superpower, this may be, curiously, the best hope for more freedom for Tibetans. The spotlight, if we choose to use it, can be turned on Tibetan internal repression and used to highlight the violations of human rights perpetrated by China. The UK should take the lead in this, by providing a platform for the Dalai Lama whenever possible, instead of following the example of the South Korean Government, which refused to grant the Dalai Lama a visa to attend a gathering of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates in July 2006. A Foreign Ministry official told Human Rights Watch, "Considering various factors, for now, we decided the Dalai Lama's visit to South Korea is not desirable." China had made its displeasure at the proposed visit clear, and threatens repercussions against any nation offering to host the Dalai Lama. The UK should stand up to China and not be intimidated by such threats.

If the Conservative Party's human rights-based foreign policy is to be distinctive then we need to recognise Tibet as a distinct entity within China, with a high degree of autonomy, as proposed by the Dalai Lama. Self-determination for Tibet within China is the only way in which human rights abuses will be prevented. The time has come for the UK to start an open dialogue with the exiled Tibetan Government.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan is ranked one of the world's most repressive societies by Freedom House. It is ruled by Saparmurat Niyazov, a dictator who calls himself "Turkmenbashi", meaning emperor of all Turkmen. He has renamed almost every street in the capital Ashgabad after himself, built multi-million pound statues of himself, and renamed months of the year after members of his family.

In December 1999 "Turkmenbashi" was voted President for life by a parliament consisting of the only candidates who were allowed to stand in its elections – members of "Turkmenbashi"'s Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, the successor to the Turkmen Communist Party. Elections do still take place to parliament, but these are nothing more than stage shows. All opposition parties are banned.

While "Turkmenbashi" claims that there are no political dissidents being held in jail for their views, his claim is not corroborated by international NGOs. Opposition leader Boris Shikhmuradov is serving a life prison sentence after providing a confession, widely believed to have been coerced, to an attempt on the President's life. Since rumours of political disquiet within the president's ruling apparatus of intelligence and security services began to circulate in 2002, culminating in the attempt on the President's life which was subsequently blamed on the opposition, a purge of non-loyalists has taken place within Government.

Furthermore, persecution of the press is commonplace, with all criticism of the President banned and many foreign journalists expelled. According to press-freedom organisation Reporters Without Borders, only North Korea and Eritrea have worse records on freedom of the press than Turkmenistan. In September, Ogulsapar Muradova, who had been working for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), was reported dead in custody.

Sadly, the international community is not proving a reliable actor on Turkmenistan. Even Ukraine's first democratic President, Viktor Yuschchenko, has heaped praise on "Turkmenbashi" as they build strong relationships based on Turkmenistan's exports of gas and oil. Reports abound over the nature of the country's relationship with Germany, with "Turkmenbashi" believed to be receiving treatment from German doctors for a number of rumoured health conditions, and allegations that Turkmenistan's revenue from its natural resources is deposited into an account with Deutsche Bank. The European Commission is also trying to upgrade Turkmenistan's trade status.

While the world worries about its natural resources, the Turkmen people continue to live with the spectre of abject poverty without any safe means to express their discontent or change their plight.



Photograph provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Uganda

Despite praise, rightly earned, for reducing HIV/AIDS figures from 30% in the early 1990s to single figures at present, President Yoweri Museveni has failed to halt violence in the north of the country, which has displaced more than 1.6 million people and lost tens of thousands of people to kidnapping or killings since it began two decades ago. Insurgency in the north of the country has continued unabated, at great cost to the life and the wellbeing of those affected. Military action and tentative peace talks have not halted the massacres and mutilations perpetrated against civilians in the north by the Lord's Resistance Army.

In the first multi-party elections in Uganda for two decades, President Museveni held on to power despite accusations by the President of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change, Dr Kizza Besigye, of intimidation of candidates.

Reports of thousands of people being denied votes require urgent investigation. There are reports of serious irregularities, including thousands of people being turned away from polling stations, allegedly not on the electoral register and underage voting was widespread. The electoral commission has also, thus far, refused to disclose the breakdown of votes cast by polling station, revealing only results from the 69 districts, an obvious obfuscation and impediment to transparency of the Government.

After sending representatives to almost all of the 19,786 polling stations, Ugandan NGO The Democracy Monitoring Group found bribery commonplace as well as more than 150,000 Ugandans who were disenfranchised – and predicted that this number could rise to over 400,000.

Along with electoral irregularities, the latest evidence of the Ugandan Government's attempt to impede the media includes the recent expulsion of a foreign journalist as

well as the internment of three local journalists on criminal charges of 'promoting sectarianism' as a result of their work. The East Africa Coordinator for Human Rights Watch said: "The Government waited until the elections were over and most of the foreign press and observers had gone to kick out one of the few resident foreign journalists, but Government attempts to intimidate the media began before the elections."

Blake Lambert, a Canadian freelance reporter, was denied re-entry to Uganda on 9th March 2006. For two years he has covered Uganda for *The Economist*, *the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, *The Washington Times* and *The Christian Science Monitor*, and was also a frequent participant in a popular talk show broadcast on Uganda's independent radio KFM. This restriction of journalists represents a worrying trend in curbing the free press.

The international community should not look the other way when abuses of this magnitude are going on unchallenged. There should be careful consideration of the effect of these abuses on society as a whole as well as the country's other more immediate and pressing issues of expulsion or internment of journalists, lack of control of insurgency in the north and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians.

Uzbekistan

"Uzbekistan's disastrous human rights record worsened further in 2005 after a Government massacre of demonstrators in Andijan in May. The Government committed major violations of the rights to freedom of religion, expression, association, and assembly, and such abuses only increased after the May massacre. Uzbekistan has no independent judiciary, and torture is widespread in both pre-trial and post-conviction facilities. The Government continues its practice of controlling, intimidating, and arbitrarily suspending or interfering with the work of civil society groups, the media, human rights activists, and opposition political parties."⁵

The events of 13 May 2005 shocked the world and brought Uzbekistan into focus for the first time. Approximately 700 innocent and unarmed protesters, many of them thinking the President was in town and hoping to tell him their troubles, were shot dead in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijan. In the ensuing year, the Government has embarked on a policy of further recrimination and punishment against those who joined the protests, and those who told the world the truth about Andijan. The regime has extracted confessions through the systematic use of torture. The Government claims that the protests in Andijan were part of an attempted *coup d'état* by foreign-funded NGOs and Islamic extremist terrorists, of whom 187 were killed after attacking Government troops.

Mukhtabar Tojibaeva and Saidjahon Zainabitdinov are two prominent human rights defenders who have been jailed in the past year for organising the 'attempted coup' in trials which did not meet international standards of due process. Another, Elena Urlaeva, was sent to a psychiatric institution. Most international NGOs and media have been expelled over the past year, many after being held publicly responsible by the Government for aiding



Former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray speaking at Conservative Party Human Rights Commission fringe meeting

the organisation of the Andijan events. The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), Freedom House, the BBC and even a United Nations Refugee Office were expelled.

The past year has also marked something of a watershed in Uzbekistan's relations with the West. As a post-9/11 ally, Uzbekistan allowed the coalition forces use of an air base in its border region with Afghanistan. As such, the thorny issue of human rights abuses never came up in diplomatic channels, to the extent that the UK's ambassador, Craig Murray, was eventually sacked for speaking out against torture. However, relations started deteriorating before Andijan, as the unsustainability of the relationship became clear. Following US condemnation of the Andijan attacks, the Uzbek Government ordered US forces to leave. The EU imposed sanctions, and as such the UK's own closeness to the regime has gradually declined.

⁵ Human Rights Overview, Uzbekistan, Human Rights Watch, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/18/uzbeki12288.htm>



A memorial to the victims of the Andijan massacre

However, it is worth noting that international policy towards Uzbekistan is still ambiguous. Germany did not use its universal jurisdiction or its jurisdiction under UN laws outlawing torture to prosecute Uzbekistan's Interior Minister when he stayed in Germany this year. The leader in exile of an opposition party was arrested in Sweden in May on an arrest warrant from the Uzbek Government, before the mistake was realised. South Korea played host to a state visit by President Karimov.

On 13 May 2006 and the days around it, events were held by Uzbek political refugees around the world to commemorate Andijan. US Senator John McCain and Congressman Christopher Smith spoke at a large conference in Washington while Uzbek embassies around Europe were confronted by demonstrators. It is interesting to note, though, that London's event took place outside Downing Street, protesting at the British Government's previous policy of

appeasing the Karimov regime.

Even in a country which has preserved so much of the USSR, it is hard to believe that a country could become more repressive after the collapse of that empire. Yet Uzbekistan's authoritarian state continues to be so.

Vietnam

Vietnam's communist Government has continued to relax economic controls since beginning its open door (or "Doi Moi") policies in the late 1980s, yet serious repression of free speech, assembly and belief remain in force. For those who are not members of the Communist Party of Vietnam, economic opportunities remain limited, while anyone in possession of democratic literature or attending unapproved religious meetings is liable to harassment, violence or imprisonment. The past year has seen promising developments, however, as increasingly bold activists use petitions and underground publishing to challenge a dictatorship nervous to improve its image and attract investment.

As Vietnam's membership of the World Trade Organisation approaches, Hanoi has made concerted attempts to improve its image on human rights. Recent months have seen the outlawing of forced recantations of faith and proposals to limit the number of crimes punishable by death. However, as the country's rulers seek to keep control, the basic facts of life under dictatorship remain. Vietnam has no independent political parties or media and the number of political and religious prisoners of conscience may run into the hundreds, with many believed to have been tortured. Closed-door political trials continue. Direct criticism of the Communist Party is banned, allowing corruption to run rampant, despite recent high level trials. Although often described as a free market economy, without the rule of law the economy remains stunted and dysfunctional, and without democracy the rule of law in Vietnam remains a distant prospect, as tight control over the Vietnamese people continues.

Religious and ethnic persecution are carried out in tandem by the Government, as the ethnic minorities of Vietnam's highlands include a large proportion of Christians. Refugees returning from Cambodia appear



Vietnam street-scene - photo provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide

to have been tortured, and the Government's extremely repressive approach towards unregistered Protestant churches among the Hmong ethnic minority is continuing. Unregistered Buddhists and Christians remain subject to violent raids and closures of places of worship, their religious leaders

Vietnam - photo provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide





A church in Vietnam – photo provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide

subject to incarceration. These actions have been particularly common in southern Vietnam. However, those churches which have been registered have experienced some degree of increasing freedom, but the procedures for registration remain arbitrary, unclear and inconsistent, leaving many house churches uncertain about the relative benefits and problems involved in attempting to register. In 2006, harassment of local churches has begun in reaction to an attempt on the part of the church leaders to register their congregations.

The most recent affront to the Vietnamese is the prohibition of internet use by 'reactionary and hostile forces', a drive accompanied by a number of long prison sentences for downloading or distributing democratic writings. In May 2005, the Government blocked the BBC's Vietnamese language website. Sentences have been especially harsh for those sending pro-democracy literature or criticism of the regime abroad.

Despite Hanoi's policies, the last year has seen a number of exciting developments.

Before the Vietnamese Communist Party's Tenth National Congress in April this year, democracy activists began distributing two documents which have gathered widespread support: the Appeal for Freedom of Association and the 2006 Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy in Vietnam. This led to the creation of Bloc 8406, named after the date of its foundation, the domestic alliance now leading calls for change. Activists have responded to the ensuing Government crackdown by strengthening Vietnam's underground journalism, founding the Free Journalists Association of Vietnam and launching the Free Expression newspaper. However, as a result of this year's increased opposition activity, many have been interrogated for days by the police, confined to their homes or districts and are under threat of re-incarceration. ■

Rankings and Measurements: The Worst Offenders

Rankings and Measurement: The Worst Offenders

In this report, we have assessed the record of the countries we have been monitoring this year, and have attempted to measure their performance using some key criteria. This measurement process is not perfect, but it gives an indication of the degree of human rights violations in different countries. We have based our assessment on the methodology used by Freedom House, in consultation with and with the agreement of Freedom House, but adapted and amended by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission. In addition to the freedoms measured in Freedom House's studies, we have also attempted to assess the scale of violations. We have divided the assessment into three categories – Freedoms, the Rule of Law and Violations – and ranked countries in each category on a scale of 1-10. For the criteria of 'Freedoms' and 'The rule of law', a rating of 1 is the highest, signifying a high

degree of freedom, while 10 is the lowest, signifying no freedom. For human rights violations, 10 is the highest ranking, so countries with the worst record score 10, while countries with few human rights abuses score 1. Our measurements and the responsibility for them are our own, but we are grateful to Freedom House and Christian Solidarity Worldwide for reviewing our figures and conclusions, and recommending amendments.

Freedoms

The basic freedoms we measured were as follows:

- Free & fair multi-party elections
- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of assembly
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of press

| Country | Elections | Speech | Assembly | Movement | Religion | Press | Total |
|--------------|-----------|--------|----------|----------|----------|-------|-------|
| North Korea | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 60 |
| Uzbekistan | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 58 |
| Turkmenistan | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 58 |
| Cuba | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 56 |
| Tibet | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 55 |
| Burma | 10 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 52 |
| Iran | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 52 |
| Belarus | 9 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 52 |
| Vietnam | 10 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 50 |
| Eritrea | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 48 |
| Saudi Arabia | 9 | 8 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 47 |
| Sudan | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 47 |
| The Maldives | 8 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 37 |
| Nepal | 8 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 37 |
| Ethiopia | 8 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 36 |
| Uganda | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 34 |
| Congo (DRC) | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 33 |

Rule of law

The criteria we used to measure the rule of law was as follows:

- Independence of the judiciary
- Fair trial procedures
- Right to legal representation
- Conduct of the police force

The results were as follows:

| Country | Judiciary | Trial | Legal representation | Police conduct | Total |
|--------------|-----------|-------|----------------------|----------------|-------|
| North Korea | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 40 |
| Burma | 10 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 39 |
| Iran | 10 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 39 |
| Uzbekistan | 10 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 39 |
| Tibet | 10 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 39 |
| Turkmenistan | 10 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 39 |
| Cuba | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 39 |
| Sudan | 10 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 38 |
| Belarus | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 38 |
| Eritrea | 10 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 38 |
| Vietnam | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 38 |
| Saudi Arabia | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 33 |
| The Maldives | 9 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 32 |
| Nepal | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 26 |
| Congo (DRC) | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 24 |
| Uganda | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 24 |
| Ethiopia | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 24 |

Violations

We measured countries' human rights record, by looking at how widespread and systematic the following violations are (shown in the table below in a-j format):

- a) Arbitrary, extrajudicial and unjust executions and killings
- b) Imprisonment or detention of people for their political or religious beliefs
- c) Torture
- d) Slavery or forced labour
- e) Institutionalised, widespread, systematic and State-sponsored rape
- f) Ethnic oppression and discrimination
- g) Religious persecution and discrimination
- h) Forcible conscription of child soldiers or use of child labour
- i) Destruction or looting of villages, crops and livestock
- j) Use of landmines

| Country | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h | i | j | Total |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Burma | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 98 |
| Sudan | 10 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 83 |
| Eritrea | 8 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 72 |
| North Korea | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 69 |
| Uzbekistan | 8 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 62 |
| Tibet | 7 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 62 |
| Iran | 8 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 57 |
| Saudi Arabia | 9 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 57 |
| Congo (DRC) | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 56 |
| Nepal | 7 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 54 |
| Uganda | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 54 |
| Turkmenistan | 7 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 |
| Vietnam | 4 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 50 |
| Ethiopia | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 43 |
| Belarus | 4 | 10 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 37 |
| Cuba | 4 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 37 |
| The Maldives | 1 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 29 |

The Overall Ranking

We added the totals together to reach the overall ranking of worst offenders, and the result is as follows:

| | | |
|----|--------------|-----|
| 1 | Burma | 189 |
| 2 | North Korea | 169 |
| 3 | Sudan | 168 |
| 4 | Uzbekistan | 159 |
| 5 | Eritrea | 158 |
| 6 | Tibet | 156 |
| 7 | Iran | 148 |
| 8 | Turkmenistan | 147 |
| 9 | Vietnam | 138 |
| 10 | Saudi Arabia | 137 |
| 11 | Cuba | 132 |
| 12 | Belarus | 127 |
| 13 | Nepal | 117 |
| 14 | Uganda | 112 |
| 15 | DRC | 107 |
| 16 | Ethiopia | 103 |
| 17 | The Maldives | 98 |

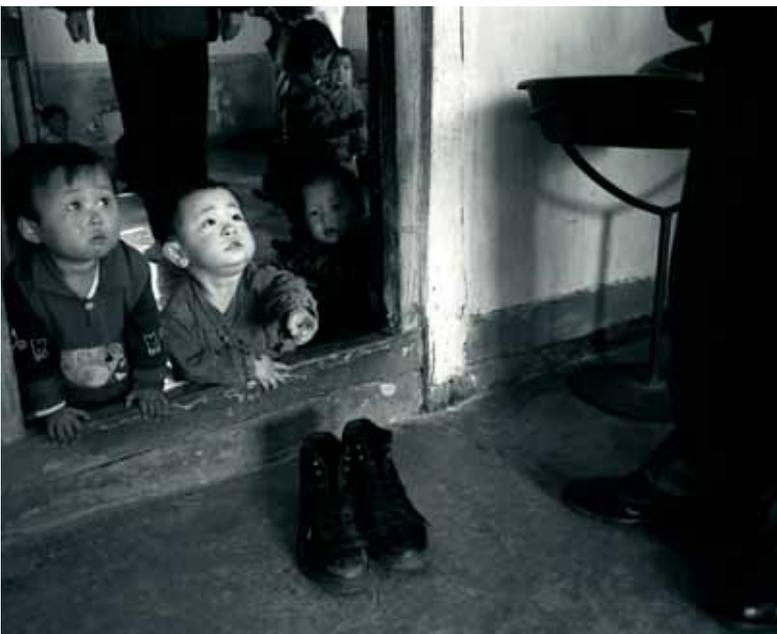
Assessment

North Korea is undoubtedly the world's most oppressive, closed society where there is no freedom at all. In the categories of 'Freedom' and 'The Rule of Law', North Korea comes out as the worst offender.

However, it will cause surprise to some that we have not ranked North Korea as the worst in the category of "human rights violations". This is because, while the violations perpetrated in North Korea are among the most severe, only certain categories of violation are taking place. Burma, Sudan and Eritrea come out worse than North Korea for human rights violations because there is a broader range of violations taking place in those countries.

Taking the rating given in each category – 'Freedom', 'The Rule of Law' and 'Violations' – and adding them together, we have produced a ranking of the world's most oppressive and brutal regimes. These are taken, of course, only from the 18 which the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission has been monitoring. North Korea is in the top five, along with Sudan, Uzbekistan and Eritrea, with Burma scoring overall the worst marks. Chinese-occupied

Photograph © EC/Echo/Javier Menendez Bonilla



Tibet, Iran, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Cuba and Belarus are not far behind, but, in reality, there is little to separate these countries in terms of oppression and brutality, and it is essential to emphasise that imprisonment, torture, rape, slavery and other violations are terrible wherever they happen, and should not be tolerated.



The only one of the Commission's areas of focus that is not included in the rankings is the issue of caste discrimination and violence against the Dalits in India. The Commission took the view that this is a thematic issue rather than a country-focus, and therefore does not merit inclusion in the rankings. India is the world's largest democracy, with a great tradition of free speech, freedom of the press, direct elections and the rule of law, and deserves credit for upholding the values of freedom and democracy despite huge challenges. It therefore seemed inappropriate to place India in a ranking list alongside dictatorships and countries which persistently violate human rights. However, it should also be emphasised that the Commission has serious concerns about the plight of the over 160 million 'Dalits' or so-called 'untouchables', and the 70 million-strong tribal castes. The Dalits are subjected to some of the worst discrimination, violence and harassment in the world – and for that reason we have been monitoring the issue and will continue to do so.

It is worth noting also the role of China in underpinning many of the regimes listed

here. While we have not looked at human rights violations in China itself, except for the situation in Tibet, we are increasingly aware that China's foreign policy is of crucial importance. China's tentacles reach almost all the countries we are monitoring – Burma, North Korea, Sudan and Vietnam in particular.

The relationships connecting some of the leaders of these states should also be taken into account. In 2006, for example, a number of the leaders of these states appeared to be forming political alliances with each other. The leaders of Belarus, Cuba and Iran made visits to each others' countries and trumpeted their stand against the 'imperialistic' agenda of the United States. Cuba and Eritrea also continued to develop an increasingly close relationship. While not included in this report as a country of concern, it is important to note that Venezuela, in pursuit of a seat of the UN Security Council, was an active participant in this alliance building, and sent a special envoy to meet with the military junta in Burma in 2006. The Non-Aligned Movement summit, which took place in Havana in September 2006, appeared to be a little more than a consolidation of these alliances, with high level representatives from North Korea, Cuba, Belarus, Iran, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Burma and Saudi Arabia. ■

Conclusions and Recommendations

Human rights violations and abuses remain widespread in too many parts of the world today. Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, persecution, slavery, torture, discrimination and restrictions continue to be perpetrated daily against many individuals and groups of people. Some violations and abuses are carried out by State parties, systematically, while others are the result of societal influences and are perpetrated by non-State parties, including terrorists, drug cartels and extremist religious groups. In some instances, however, violations are perpetrated by non-State actors with the complicity of State institutions, as is often the case in India.

The response of the international community, including the United Kingdom, the European Union and the United Nations, to these continuing, persistent, widespread and systematic violations has been woefully slow and weak. In too many instances where early and strong action could have saved lives, the international community's response, if it has responded at all, has been belated and reactive. Too many regimes in the world today are in constant violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which all members of the United Nations have signed up to. Many countries, despite signing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, continue to flagrantly violate international law.

The United Kingdom is in a unique position to make a greater difference for human rights around the world, as a leading member of the European Union, the G8, the Commonwealth, NATO, the UN Security Council and as a key ally of the United States. We should seize the influence and opportunity we have.

The work of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission has only just begun. In our first year, we have made a contribution to highlighting human rights concerns in individual countries, campaigning on behalf

of individual prisoners, and raising awareness within our own party and beyond about the suffering of many around the world. But there is much more to do.

Throughout this year, we have not had the resources or the expertise required to make an assessment of every country in the world in which violations are occurring. For that reason, we have chosen to focus our efforts on 18 countries, detailed in this report. These are a mixture of some of the very worst offenders, some of the most forgotten situations and some countries where there may be an opportunity to assist in a process of reform.

In our work, we have sought to develop a 'SMART' approach, taking action and making recommendations which are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timely

We aim to combine a principled, passionate, idealistic belief in the unique value and dignity of every human being, and the universality of human rights, with a realistic, though bold and creative, approach to the challenges of foreign policy. In that context, we offer the following recommendations to the Conservative Party and our country, and we will build on these in 2007 to develop further ideas and campaigns to make a difference to those who are denied the most basic freedoms. There are many other measures which the current Government and a future Conservative Government should consider adopting, which we have not detailed here. We wish to invite Non-Governmental Organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, Transparency International, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and others to contribute policy ideas, in light of this Annual Report, related both to the general promotion of human rights and

freedom and specific recommendations for individual countries, to the Commission for consideration as we develop a more detailed policy agenda in the year ahead. We call for a substantive consultation with human rights organisations and other experts following the release of this report. In the meantime, we present these 12 recommendations as the key steps which should form the foundation of a new Conservative Party foreign policy with the promotion of human rights at its heart.

Consistency – We believe human rights concerns should be at the heart of foreign policy, and should be applied consistently to all nations. That means raising concerns and putting pressure on regimes and governments, whether they are regarded as allies or not. We have to be prepared to challenge China and Saudi Arabia, as much as North Korea and Burma, to cease their gross violations of human rights. We must also act consistently ourselves, and uphold human rights in the United Kingdom, especially in the war on terror.

Strategic priority – The promotion of democracy and human rights should be one of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's explicit strategic priorities. Currently, human rights is relegated to an issue within the category of 'sustainable development', which is seventh in the list of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's strategic priorities. Human rights promotion should, however, be a priority category in its own right.

Pro-active support for non-violent democracy movements and indigenous media, civil society and human rights organisations – We cannot impose democracy and freedom on other societies, but we can and should support those who are struggling for those values in their own societies. We should provide more funding to pro-democracy, civil society, media and human rights organisations courageously working on the front-line. For example, there

are several Burmese indigenous pro-democracy groups doing vital work on the Thai-Burmese border, researching, documenting and disseminating information to the international community. They deserve funding from the Department for International Development (DFID). Moral support is also an extremely powerful tool when it is not possible or wise to give financial support. For example, in Cuba providing foreign funding might endanger dissidents. Instead, inviting human rights and democracy activists and other peaceful dissidents to embassy events for example, or simply making regular phone calls to the family of a political prisoner can be immensely encouraging to the dissidents themselves and also send a strong message to the Government that these individuals matter to the UK Government. In countries such as Belarus or Cuba, it can even provide a level protection. Democracy activists in Vietnam should receive more international support, as was highlighted in a visit to Vietnam by Conservative Party Human Rights Commission member Rado Tylecote.

Review the role of Ambassadors and other diplomats – Ambassadors and other diplomats should be required to be proactive in supporting dissidents and documenting human rights violations, and in assisting victims of human rights violations. Currently it depends to a large extent on the individual Ambassador or diplomat. It should be a requirement of the job, and outstanding service should be rewarded and recognised. Embassies should become freedom houses and Ambassadors should provide dissidents with a platform. These ideas are detailed in a book called *Breaking the Real Axis of Evil: How to bring an end to the world's last dictators by 2025*, by former US Ambassador to Hungary Mark Palmer and could be adapted for British foreign policy.

Appoint a Minister of State for International Human Rights, an Ambassador-at-Large for International Human Rights and other key senior human rights representatives –

Currently the Minister in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office responsible for human rights also has responsibility for trade. This means the Minister faces potential conflicts of interest and cannot give undivided attention to human rights issues. The Government should appoint a Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with responsibility solely for international human rights. A senior diplomat should also be appointed as Ambassador-at-Large for International Human Rights, to monitor and co-ordinate the efforts of Ambassadors around the world. The Human Rights, Democracy and Governance Group should be strengthened, and the Freedom of Religion Panel should be given greater prominence, with the appointment of a permanent Special Representative of the FCO Freedom of Religion Panel to monitor international religious freedom violations. In Opposition, the Conservative Party should appoint a Shadow Minister of State for International Human Rights.

Use and support pro-democracy radio broadcasts into undemocratic countries – Senior British politicians should give interviews regularly on radio stations such as the country-specific BBC World Service and Radio Free Asia. Greater support should be given to the BBC World Service to expand its broadcasts.

Use of sanctions – Targeted economic sanctions should be used more often where appropriate, on a case-by-case basis. In some situations sanctions are not an effective means of leverage, but in other situations they are. The UK should try to introduce EU or UN sanctions where possible, but should be willing to take the lead and introduce unilateral sanctions where appropriate, desirable and necessary.

Action on arms trade – A thorough and comprehensive review of the UK's policy on the arms trade should be conducted. While we welcome the efforts the British Government has made to support an international arms trade treaty, it is clear that the UK itself has not implemented a consistent or coherent policy on arms sales. The UK continues to export arms to countries which systematically violate human rights, thus undermining the progress it has made in developing a more transparent licensing system and strengthening export controls. The Government should explain why it continues to grant licenses for the export of arms to countries listed as 'major concerns' in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Human Rights Report. The UK's system of end use monitoring is insufficient and should be strengthened, to ensure that once arms exports have left the UK, they are not misused to commit human rights violations or diverted to other governments or illegal armed groups.

Reform of the UN – The UN is the only club in the world in which a country can frequently violate the rules with little or no penalty. Action should be taken to ensure that countries which systematically violate human rights should not belong to the Human Rights Council. Members of the Human Rights Council should be selected on the grounds that they uphold human rights. Countries which systematically violate human rights should face suspension from the UN itself.

Strengthen the Community of Democracies – The UK should make greater efforts to work with the Community of Democracies, both as a caucus within the UN and beyond.

Uphold and implement UN Resolutions – Every step should be taken to uphold UN Security Council resolution 1674, adopted in 2006, which condemns attacks on civilians, especially women and children, in armed

conflicts and invites the UN Secretary-General to “take concrete steps to enhance the capacity of the United Nations” to protect civilians – what has become known as the “Responsibility to Protect”. Action should also be taken to promote the full and effective implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Humanitarian intervention – Military action should only ever be a last resort. That is why we advocate the measures above, to pro-actively promote human rights rather than have to reactively intervene militarily. However, in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity, where every political, diplomatic and economic measure has been tried, military intervention should be considered in certain circumstances in order to save lives, provided it has a realistic chance of success. ■

¹ This figure is taken from the 2001 Census; given India's continued population growth, the figure today is estimated to be closer to 180 million.

² Attack and Rape of 17 Women outside Kalma IDP Camp, SOAT Press Release, <http://www.soatsudan.org/>, 26 July 2006

³ Rapes on rise at Sudan's Darfur refugee camp-IRC, AP/ST, 23 August 2006

⁴ Report on the visit of the Swedish Human Rights Delegation to China and Tibet, 4 October 1994. (Source: Free Tibet Campaign)

⁵ Human Rights Overview, Uzbekistan, Human Rights Watch, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/18/uzbeki12288.htm>



 **Conservatives**



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