

## PREFACE

All men and women desire and deserve to live in dignity and liberty. President Bush said: "The advance of freedom is the great story of our time." Promoting human rights and democracy is a worldwide phenomenon and there is a growing global discussion of democracy and the universal values protected by democratic governance.

The increasing demand for democratic governance reflects recognition that the best guarantor of human rights is a thriving democracy with representative, accountable institutions of government, equal rights under the rule of law, a robust civil society, political pluralism, and independent media.

The United States and other free nations have a duty to defend human rights and help spread democracy's blessings. We must help countries develop the democratic institutions that will ensure human rights are respected over the long term. We must help fragile democracies deliver a better life for their citizens. We must call countries to account when they retreat from their international human rights commitments. And we must always stand in solidarity with the courageous men and women across the globe that live in fear yet dream of freedom.

Defending and advancing human rights and democratic principles keeps faith with our country's most cherished values and lays the foundation for lasting world peace. Fulfilling the promise of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and building vibrant democracies worldwide will take generations, but it is work of the utmost urgency that cannot be delayed.

With these thoughts in mind, I am pleased to transmit the Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005* to the United States Congress.

*Condoleezza Rice*  
Secretary of State

