



**RIGHT TO READ VOLUNTEER
TRAINING MANUAL AND RESOURCES**

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter	2
Working Agreements	3
Volunteer Job Descriptions	4
Expectations and Duties	13
Working with Adults.....	15
Working with Immigrants.....	16
Working with Refugees.....	18
Cultural Backgrounds and History	
-History and Current Politics.....	20
Resources	

Welcome Letter

The ability to understand, speak, read, and write English as the nation's common language is crucial to the successful integration of immigrants into our society. Without English, immigrants are locked into low wage jobs, blocked from acquiring new skills and new jobs, denied full access to health and other services, and shut off from contact with the larger society. Vocational and post-secondary educational opportunities also enable immigrants to realize their full potential.

<http://usdiversitydynamics.com/nj/id8.html> American Immigrant Policy Portal

Working Agreements

What is a Working Agreement?

A working agreement is unspoken standards and expectations that we create to improve the efficiency of the work environment as well as give you a focus during your time working with Right to Read. As a core member of the learning experience we expect you to follow these guidelines:

- Be invested in the Students, not in the content. Be Sensitive to their needs
- Your responsibility is focused on helping the students understand the basic information of the lesson, not your own personal views. Too much information too fast can lead to confusion.
- Classroom Aides will help with cultural integration
- Remember that you are working with adults and there should be an adult relationship between you, your classroom instructor, and the class of students
- Volunteers will work with both one-on-one and classroom led teaching
- Your role is encouragement and empathy
- All volunteering is from the heart. Sincerity creates empathy
- Provide hugs and TLC as needed
- Be active in understanding the personality and cultures of our students
- Update your mime skills or start working on them
- Good Cop/Bad Cop The teacher expects Academic success, you encourage and offer help

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Position Summary

ESL/ABE Classroom Volunteer

The ESL/ABE Classroom Aide will help foster English Skills for students Self-reliance and involvement in the community. They will help the students with studying and preparing for the GED as well as improve conversational English skills.

- Aide in studies for the GED
- One-on-One help with the Students
- Printing and preparing materials for class

CRESL Aide

The CRESL Classroom aide will help promote the use of English in class as well as help develop the skills necessary for learning within the classroom. These skills include learning how to hold writing utensils, how to use the workbook, among others. They will also help in the teaching of computer skills to promote “computer literacy.”

- Help develop proper classroom skills and etiquette
- Copying/Printing of materials
- One-on-One help to students at appropriate time
- Encourage English Only in the classroom
- Encourage students and maintain motivation

Citizenship/Civics Aide

- Aide in learning history and civics skills related to the Naturalization process
- Administering mock citizenship tests including the reading and writing portions
- Small group/One-on-One aid and support

Shared Responsibilities

- Assist office staff with student record attainment, filing, updating
- Assist Teachers with material preparation (laminating, cutting, copying)
- Office Tasks
- Database Entry
- Fundraising (Rare but important)

Volunteer Position Description

Right to Read, Weld County

CRESL Classroom Aide

Purpose:

To help Refugee students learn basic communication skills in English as well as help them to adequately integrate into local cultural customs and norms. Develop basic learning and studying skills.

Results:

Helps students become better acclimated to living in America and specifically Greeley. Also encourage learning skills and know how to read, write, and speak at a Basic English level. Help the students comprehend basic ideas including directions, how to make a phone call, and write down information in English that other people will comprehend.

Suggested Activities:

One on one mentoring of students below the average skill level in the classroom. Computer lab supervision. Cultural integration and development, particularly helping students understand what services are offered by the community and how to use those services. These services include things like the post office, hospital, police station, and schools.

Measures:

We will be using two measures during the course of the semester. The first will be a review of a goal sheet created at the beginning of the semester. The volunteer goal list will be personal and organizational goals they would like to accomplish during the semester. At the end of the semester, the teacher and aide will review the sheet and see what they were able to accomplish and what they can improve.

Secondly, in the middle of the semester the teacher, volunteer, and Executive Director will sit down for a check in and measure the needs from both the volunteer and the teacher. The meeting will consist of looking at the volunteer and teacher duties and responsibilities to see if both are meeting their expectations and discuss ways to improve the classroom learning experience for the students. This meeting will be informal but mandatory for all volunteers once during the semester or more if needed.

Qualifications:

- Patience
- Empathy
- Willingness to learn and respect other cultures
- Basic Computer skills including Word, Excel, and Internet use
- Ability to speak English
- Self-motivation to actively engage with students
- Professional Demeanor and Dress

Time Frame:

1 Semester consisting of 3-4 months. Weekly 6-8 hours in the classroom. Daily you are looking at 2-3 hours depending on the time of the class and the volunteer's availability.

Site:

Right to Read Classrooms and Computer Lab

Supervision:

Direct supervision will be by the teacher in the classroom that the volunteer is working with. They will also be supervised by the volunteer coordinator (Interim Volunteer Coordinator: VISTA) and finally the Executive Director. The organization is small enough that the Volunteers will feel comfortable taking their concerns to all levels of management if the teacher is not addressing their needs.

Benefits:

Volunteers will be able to feel a part of the organizational commitment to the students and help them become active participants in their community. They will be able to feel good knowing that they positively impact a set of people and have helped improve their quality of life. The focus in this class will be social benefits more so than skill development because students here are working on the basics of learning and comprehension so difficult to measure any tangible outcomes.

Volunteers will also be able to gain skills in non-verbal communication, patience, and adult education. Adult ESL education is difficult because some students do not have a background in formal learning so you have to change your approach depending on the education level of the student. This allows for more freedom and helps volunteers learn to create their own approach to each student. Again this is of course dependent on the class needs and the need of the teacher.

Volunteer Position Description

Right to Read, Weld County

ESL Level 3-5 Classroom Aide

Purpose:

To help advance refugee students acquire higher concept skills related to US cultures and norms. Also help advance their English understanding to include following directions and holding a sustained conversation about higher level ideas and topics including slang, analogies, and lingo. Hold ongoing conversations with native English speakers.

Results:

Students graduate from the ESL program into ESL/ABE Courses, GED Preparatory Course or Citizenship/Civic Engagement courses. Students also can have outside results including a better job, better hours, or increased wages that are not measured within Right to Read but are direct results of their education.

Suggested Activities:

One on one mentoring of students below the average skill level in the classroom. Computer lab observation. Cultural integration and development, particularly helping students understand how to communicate with native English speakers. Also start to help students understand higher concept communication skills that include jargon, lingo, and sayings. These phrases would include things like understanding the word “cool” means something is popular or relaxed. These skills would be developed with maintaining English only conversations with students both in and out of the classroom.

Measures:

We will be using two measures during the course of the semester. The first will be a review of a goal sheet created at the beginning of the semester. The volunteer goal list will be personal and organizational goals they would like to accomplish during the semester. At the end of the semester, the teacher and aide will review the sheet and see what they were able to accomplish and what they can improve.

Secondly, in the middle of the semester the teacher, volunteer, and Executive Director will sit down for a check in and measure the needs from both the volunteer and the teacher. The meeting will consist of looking at the volunteer and teacher duties and responsibilities to see if both are meeting their expectations and discuss ways to improve the classroom learning experience for the students. This meeting will be informal but mandatory for all volunteers once during the semester or more if needed.

Qualifications:

- Patience
- Empathy
- Willingness to learn and respect other cultures
- Basic Computer skills including Word, Excel, and Internet use
- Ability to speak English
- Self-motivation to actively engage with students
- Professional Demeanor and Dress

Time Frame:

1 Semester consisting of 3-4 months. Weekly 6-8 hours in the classroom. Daily you are looking at 2-3 hours depending on the time of the class and the volunteer's availability.

Site:

Right to Read Classrooms and Computer Lab

Supervision:

Direct supervision will be by the teacher in the classroom that the volunteer is working with. They will also be supervised by the volunteer coordinator (Interim Volunteer Coordinator: VISTA) and finally the Executive Director. The organization is small enough that the Volunteers will feel comfortable taking their concerns to all levels of management if the teacher is not addressing their needs.

Benefits:

This class will be focused on social benefits. As a volunteer you will get to see students start to understand concepts that seemed foreign or confusing to them. You will also help aid in their English literacy skills to help them graduate from CRESL and ESL courses into citizenship or GED courses. You will feel good knowing that you were part of the organizational commitment to these students.

Volunteers will also benefit from learning how to teach English to non-native speaking students at an adult level. These skills are transferrable because they help the volunteer understand different approaches in the classroom and how to aid students with non-verbal communication and change their way of teaching to a simpler, less cultural jargon-filled way.

Right to Read, Weld County

ESL/ABE Classroom Aide

Purpose:

To aid students in retention of information relevant to the GED test. Information that will you aid in teaching includes language arts and mathematics.

Results:

Students will take the GED test and pass or they will continue in their studies until they are prepared for the test.

Suggested Activities:

One on one mentoring of students with activities that includes mathematics, reading comprehension, and writing. Helping students with their grammar and checking their spelling on written work. Write out complex mathematical equations including solutions on the whiteboard for students. Help students understand higher level reading comprehension ideas including theme, subject, and analogies amongst others.

Measures:

We will be using two measures during the course of the semester. The first will be a review of a goal sheet created at the beginning of the semester. The volunteer goal list will be personal and organizational goals they would like to accomplish during the semester. At the end of the semester, the teacher and aide will review the sheet and see what they were able to accomplish and what they can improve.

Secondly, in the middle of the semester the teacher, volunteer, and Executive Director will sit down for a check in and measure the needs from both the volunteer and the teacher. The meeting will consist of looking at the volunteer and teacher duties and responsibilities to see if both are meeting their expectations and discuss ways to improve the classroom learning experience for the students. This meeting will be informal but mandatory for all volunteers once during the semester or more if needed.

Qualifications:

- Patience
- Empathy
- Willingness to learn and respect other cultures
- Basic Computer skills including Word, Excel, and Internet use
- Ability to speak English
- Self-motivation to actively engage with students
- Professional Demeanor and Dress

Time Frame:

1 Semester consisting of 3-4 months. Weekly 6-8 hours in the classroom. Daily you are looking at 2-3 hours depending on the time of the class and the volunteer's availability.

Site:

Right to Read Classrooms and Computer Lab

Supervision:

Direct supervision will be by the teacher in the classroom that the volunteer is working with. They will also be supervised by the volunteer coordinator (Interim Volunteer Coordinator: VISTA) and finally the Executive Director. The organization is small enough that the Volunteers will feel comfortable taking their concerns to all levels of management if the teacher is not addressing their needs.

Benefits:

As a volunteer you will be able to feel good knowing that you are helping the students achieve personal academic goals. You will also be able to gain teaching skills and public speaking skills. This position will allow you to review your reading, writing, and arithmetic skills as well as work on different teaching strategies and get comfortable with both group work and working with individuals.

Right to Read, Weld County

Citizenship/Civic Engagement Classroom Aide

Purpose:

To help aid students with their retention of important U.S. facts and history to help them successfully apply for citizenship.

Results:

Students will be prepared to take the Citizenship examination in Denver, CO which includes a written and verbal portions. The students will be able to successfully understand the U.S. Government system as well as major history dating back to the birth of the nation up to the current president. Students will also be able to successfully speak and write in English and be able to understand the motions and how to successfully earn their citizenship.

Suggested Activities:

A volunteer will help with the daily class by quizzing students on relevant information, asking questions from the actual citizenship exam and passing out flyers and information. They will also work one on one with students helping them with their writing skills and their communication skills so that they can be understood. They will also participate in mock citizenship examinations.

Measures:

We will be using two measures during the course of the semester. The first will be a review of a goal sheet created at the beginning of the semester. The volunteer goal list will be personal and organizational goals they would like to accomplish during the semester. At the end of the semester, the teacher and aide will review the sheet and see what they were able to accomplish and what they can improve.

Secondly, in the middle of the semester the teacher, volunteer, and Executive Director will sit down for a check in and measure the needs from both the volunteer and the teacher. The meeting will consist of looking at the volunteer and teacher duties and responsibilities to see if both are meeting their expectations and discuss ways to improve the classroom learning experience for the students. This meeting will be informal but mandatory for all volunteers once during the semester or more if needed.

Qualifications:

- Patience
- Empathy
- Willingness to learn and respect other cultures
- Basic Computer skills including Word, Excel, and Internet use
- Ability to speak English
- Self-motivation to actively engage with students
- Professional Demeanor and Dress

Time Frame:

1 Semester consisting of 3-4 months. Weekly 6-8 hours in the classroom. Daily you are looking at 2-3 hours depending on the time of the class and the volunteer's availability.

Site:

Right to Read Classrooms and Computer Lab

Supervision:

Direct supervision will be by the teacher in the classroom that the volunteer is working with. They will also be supervised by the volunteer coordinator (Interim Volunteer Coordinator: VISTA) and finally the Executive Director. The organization is small enough that the Volunteers will feel comfortable taking their concerns to all levels of management if the teacher is not addressing their needs.

Benefits:

Volunteers will be able to have a direct hand in helping students gain their citizenship. Volunteers will be able to learn more about the citizenship process and gain a better understanding at the difficulty that non-citizens have to go through. Volunteers will also be able to refresh their American history and remember the important name, dates, and places that makes America so great.

Expectations and Duties

Inside the Classroom

Classroom Aide and One-on-One Aide

- Retention, Empowerment, Encourage
- Right to Read is structured for classroom teaching but sometimes requires individual aide to help students who may not be fully understanding the lesson
- During the lecture time a classroom aide should be walking around making sure that (a) Students are actively participating in the lesson (b) providing the extra help to accomplish the lesson
- Students can be talked to one on one but only when the teacher deems it necessary. Try and motivate students to follow along during the lecture rather than feeling like you have to teach each student individually.
- Enjoy and relax in your classroom. Don't be afraid to be used as an example for the Teacher during one of their lessons.

Your Relationship with your teacher

- You need to try and make sure that you and your teacher talk before class to prepare lessons and also find out what is expected of you that day.
- Make sure that you are actively involved in the classroom. If you feel underutilized make sure to let your teacher know so they can help incorporate you more.
- Make sure you are on the same page with your teacher about their own personal classroom expectations and the way they want to moderate the classroom.
- Don't be afraid to take on more active teaching responsibilities if you and the teacher feel comfortable doing so
- For accountability purposes make sure that you know your Teacher's printer/copier code and use **only** that code.

Responsibilities Outside of the Classroom

- Feel free to interact with the students in between classes. Encourage conversations in English with you and other students. They are here to practice their English and as a volunteer that is your most valuable asset to the organization.
- Be comfortable with the use of the computer lab. Make sure you talk to your teacher about what lessons are taught in the computer lab and what programs the students should be using.
- You will mostly be utilized as a facilitator in the computer lab. You will make sure that students are on track and focused on the lesson.
- Provide hugs and TLC as needed. Try to encourage the students. It will take time for them to understand English and volunteers are the first line of defense in helping them get over the hurdles

Working with Adults

Working with Adults is challenging because it requires a different teaching style. To be an effective aide it is important to understand how to teach adults and what the expectations are. Here are some articles and interesting dialogues that should help to clarify how to approach adult education. Please refer to the resources section of the manual for more help.

Principles of Adult Learning

Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles

Instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught. Strategies such as case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluation are most useful. Instructors adopt a role of facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader.

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

*information provided by Malcolm Knowles Adult Education research and his book, *Informal adult education: a guide for administrators, leaders, and teachers* information here provided by <http://www.instructionaldesign.org/theories/andragogy.html>

Working with Immigrants

Immigrant Adults as Learners: Lessons from the Field

September 16, 2011

Having taught in higher education for years, I assumed I was on familiar ground when I began teaching a class of 28 Bachelor's degree-seeking students—half of which were immigrants. The content of my courses was obviously familiar, but the dynamics of the classroom and the needs of the foreign-born students were not. My reflections on this experience led me to a series of insights that has increased my effectiveness as a teacher.

Here are the top insights I gathered from teaching immigrants:

1. The Scope of Interest for College-level Education

Between 1990 and 2000 the number of immigrants doubled to 250,000 in Minnesota alone. These immigrants settled in major metropolitan areas like the Twin Cities metro area, Fairbault, and other populated areas around the state. The number of immigrant college students has grown steadily; 32 percent of adult immigrants have some college education and wish to continue their studies to complete their degree on American soil.

2. Barriers to Success for Immigrant College Students

Language Barriers: This is not the “they-do-not-speak-passable-English barrier”, but the barrier that exists with use of complex figurative language tools such as idioms, similes, metaphors, and provincialisms. This is far from familiar to these students because they are based on implicit cultural assumptions and practices. Instructors often do not realize that even a syllabus is infused with confusing figurative language. The assigned reading is full of obstacles of this type and the students may be grasping only part of the knowledge available to them. It is unrealistic to assume that everyone understands the question at hand.

Cultural Barriers: In some countries, teachers are held in such high regard, and questioning the teacher on an assignment or test question is akin to disrespect. The student who wants to do well is left in a cultural quandary—go against personal cultural norms to get a needed answer or try guess what the teacher really wants.

Physical barriers: I shake each student's hand at the beginning of the first session of a course. It creates a bond and a sense of accessibility between the student and me. Imagine my surprise when a student told me that his culture did not allow male-female contact except between husband and wife. There are also countries where eye contact between teacher or a person of authority and a student is a sign of disrespect.

3. Mutual Understanding

First, it's likely that immigrants have made multiple sacrifices to obtain higher education. As is true with native-born adult learners, they have families and a full-time jobs while they are attending classes. Most of my immigrant students, however, had two to three jobs, slept only four hours a day, were taking a full course load, and were paying for their education as they went so as not to get into debt—even when that meant taking money away from basic needs. They do these things while living in homes that house multiple families who depend on each other for support in the absence of extended families they left behind.

Second, immigrants do not take any part of the education process for granted. They have a high level of understanding of the value of education, and therefore demand nothing less than the best from themselves. They are quick learners and will absorb the information if it is presented in a way that they can grasp it.

4. What the Students want from their Teachers

First and foremost, assume nothing. If an assignment is late, don't make the assumption the student doesn't care. If the assignment misses the mark, don't assume it is because the student is lazy. The most important thing these students want from their teachers is feedback, which is immediate, specific, and straightforward feedback. The learning curve with immigrant students tends to be remarkable. Feedback on one assignment is immediately put into place in the next assignment. Within the 13-courses that I taught, I had a number of students move from a grade of 'D' to a grade of 'A' because of the regular, specific, and applicable feedback I gave to them.

5. A Deeper Understanding

Each student that enters our classroom deserves the same professional level of education. Unlike students with physical and mental disabilities who are visible or documented, immigrant students have invisible barriers that we don't know about and they don't recognize are obstacles to effective learning. Our awareness of these barriers can make all the difference.

As educators, we try to provide students with learning outcomes that give them skills and knowledge they can apply in their personal and professional lives. Each student is equal in importance, and as such it is our duty to do all we are capable of to proffer our content in a way that each student can excel if they so desire. Immigrant students bring tremendous richness to the classroom. Their perspectives, values, and desire to learn are inspiring for the instructor as well as for other students.

Immigrant students understand something about education that makes teaching them both an honor and a challenge. John Dewey said it best, *"Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is, not a preparation for life; education is life itself."* -My Pedagogic Creed (1897)

About the Author: This article was written by Leslie Shore, an adjunct instructor for [Rasmussen College](http://www.rasmussen.edu).
<http://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/immigrants-as-learners/>

Working with Refugees

Here is some advice and help to understand how to work with Refugees in the classroom. To make a CRESL class a success, you need to remember a few important notes; here is a study from New Zealand that directly talks about Key factors for effective Refugee learning

2012 Study from the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence-New Zealand

<https://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/ako-hub/ako-aotearoa-northern-hub/adult-refugee-learners-Benseman>

Key Factors in Learning

The responses to this question varied considerably, but often included some aspect of the BLT role on-site in the class. Other suggestions included:

- **The value of those with the same language working together**
- **The strong support from other learners and tutors**
- **Practicing outside of class**
- **Receiving immediate feedback from the tutor identifying errors**
- **Writing two sentences daily using words put up by the tutor**
- **Use of writing to help memorizing**
- **Clear explanations by the tutor of what is expected in a task**
- **Homework sheets to practice on**
- **Constant practice**
- **Pictures/illustrations to indicate meanings**
- **Use of CD's to consolidate learning**
- **Revision of previous session-“It helps us remember”**
- **Practicing question and answer routines**
- **Repetition to consolidate learning**

Key Strategies for Success-Instructors

- **‘being human’ –owning up to mistakes (useful in de-mystifying the teacher as expert), being prepared to be light-hearted when appropriate, self-effacing, using touch when appropriate (even with men)**
- **The importance of catering for everyone in class, including higher level learners who can easily be forgotten**

- Ensuring that learners have all the requisite 'learning blocks' on which to build higher levels of learning – 'never assume they understand things we take for granted (like what a full stop is for) and it takes a long time
- Importance of everyone experiencing success by pitching teaching at the right level for the learner
- Ensuring relevance of teaching content by using *Realia* or Everyday life tasks and issues
- Approaching tasks in several different ways (e.g. using pictures, speech, and words) to ensure relevance; being prepared to rephrase and re-present if not successful
- Importance of teaching all four literacy skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking); ensure that writing is not the "forgotten skill"
- Constantly reviewing skills – revisit and recycle as much as possible by choosing resources that repeat prior learning to help them be confident
- Importance of self-efficacy through praising achievement- "I can do this"
- The value of a cycle of modeling/acting/role-play/recycle/reflection/practice in pairs
- Importance of basic list of 220 sight words, with some taught everyday
- Phonics, especially for low level learners
- "Seizing the Moment" being responsive in your teaching, looking for opportunities to maximize learning with individuals
- Dictation with all levels

Pg. 18-22

Dr. Benseman, John Adult refugee learners with limited literacy: needs and effective responses
Online. <https://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/ako-hub/ako-aotearoa-northern-hub/adult-refugee-learners-Benseman>

Current Politics of the Middle East, North Africa, Mexico, South America and Asia

Reports from the countries that we serve

Human Rights Report for the World from the State Department as of 2012

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

Brazil

Brazil is a constitutional, multiparty republic. In 2010 voters chose Dilma Rousseff as president in elections widely considered free and fair. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The most significant human rights abuses included poor and at times life-threatening conditions in some prisons; human trafficking, especially sex trafficking of children and adolescents; and forced labor and exploitative working conditions.

Other human rights problems included unlawful killings by state police; excessive force, beatings, abuse, and torture of detainees and inmates by police and prison security forces; prolonged pretrial detention and inordinate delays of trials; judicial censorship of media; government corruption; violence and discrimination against women; violence against children, including sexual abuse; discrimination against indigenous persons and minorities; violence based on sexual orientation; insufficient enforcement of labor laws; and child labor in the informal sector.

The government continued to prosecute officials who committed abuses; however, an inefficient judicial process delayed justice for victims and perpetrators of human rights violations

Burma

Burma's parliamentary government is headed by President Thein Sein. On April 1, the country held largely transparent and inclusive by-elections in which the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, chaired by Aung San Suu Kyi, won 43 of 45 contested seats out of a total 664 seats in the legislature. The by-elections contrasted sharply

with the 2010 general elections, which were neither free nor fair. The ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) continued to hold an overwhelming majority of the seats in the national parliament and state/regional assemblies, and active-duty military officers continued to wield authority at each level of government. Military security forces reported to military channels, and civilian security forces, such as the police, reported to a nominally civilian ministry headed by an active-duty military general.

In 2012 the government's continued reform efforts resulted in significant human rights improvements, although legal and policy revisions had yet to be implemented fully or consistently at the local level, particularly in ethnic nationality areas. On January 13, President Thein Sein released an estimated 300 political prisoners, including top figures of the prodemocracy movement and all imprisoned journalists, and amnestied an estimated 140 political prisoners in subsequent releases, though none of the 2012 releases were unconditional. The government eased longstanding restrictions imposed on its citizens, including by relaxing censorship laws governing the media, expanding labor rights and criminalizing forced labor, and returning professional licenses to practice law for the majority of lawyers who had been disbarred for political activities or for their representation of political activists. The government also eased restrictions on dissidents both from within and outside the country, including removal of more than 2,000 names from a government blacklist of persons barred from entering or leaving the country based on their suspected political activity.

An outbreak of communal violence in June between predominantly Buddhist Rakhine and predominantly Muslim Rohingya in Rakhine State claimed the lives of an estimated 100 civilians and displaced tens of thousands before the central government reestablished calm. Violence broke out again in October and resulted in deaths estimated to exceed 100 and the burning of more than 3,000 houses in predominantly Rohingya villages. The central government took positive steps by deploying security forces to suppress violence, granting the international community access to the conflict areas, forming an investigative commission into the causes of the violence, and engaging international experts on reconciliation. Intercommunal tensions remained high. At the end of the year, there were more than 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) resulting from the violence in Rakhine State.

The Burma Army escalated the use of force against the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in December, including through the use of air power. In July the government stopped issuing travel permission for UN humanitarian aid convoys to travel to Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)-controlled areas, effectively cutting off an estimated 40,000 IDPs from access to international humanitarian assistance. Local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were generally able to access these populations during this period. KIA forces allegedly destroyed civilian infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and trains, and targeted attacks on police officials in Kachin State.

Significant human rights problems in the country persisted, including conflict-related abuses in ethnic minority border states; abuse of prisoners, continued detention of more than 200 political prisoners and restrictions on released political prisoners; and a general lack of rule of law resulting in corruption and the deprivation of land and livelihoods.

Government security forces were allegedly responsible for cases of extrajudicial killings, rape, and torture. The government abused some prisoners and detainees, held some persons in harsh and life-threatening conditions, and failed to protect civilians in conflict zones.

The government undertook some legal reforms during the year, and in practice restrictions on the exercise of a variety of human rights lessened markedly, if unevenly and unreliably, compared to past years. Nevertheless, a number of laws restricting freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement remained. The government allowed for greater expression by civil society, and NGOs were able to operate more openly than in previous years; however, the mandatory registration process for NGOs remained cumbersome and nontransparent.

The government signed an action plan with the UN to end illegal child soldiers. Though there were several well publicized demobilizations of child soldiers during the year, recruitment of child soldiers continued. Discrimination against ethnic minorities and stateless persons continued, as did trafficking in persons--particularly of women and girls--although the government took actions to combat this problem. Forced labor, including that of children, persisted.

The government generally did not take action to prosecute or punish those responsible for human rights abuses, with a few isolated exceptions. Abuses continued with impunity.

Ethnic armed groups also committed human rights abuses, including forced labor and recruitment of child soldiers, and failed to protect civilians in conflict zones.

Cuba

Cuba is an authoritarian state led by Raul Castro, who is president of the council of state and council of ministers, Communist Party (CP) first secretary, and commander in chief of security forces. The constitution recognizes the CP as the only legal party and "the superior leading force of society and of the state." The October municipal elections were neither free nor fair. A CP candidacy commission preapproved all candidates for National Assembly elections anticipated for 2013. Security forces reported to a national leadership that included members of the military and conducted a range of oppressive actions and behaviors against civil rights activists and ordinary citizens alike.

The principal human rights abuses were: abridgement of the right of citizens to change the government; government threats, intimidation, mobs, harassment, and detentions to prevent free expression and peaceful assembly; and a record number of politically motivated and at times violent short-term detentions.

The following additional human rights abuses continued: unlawful use of force, harsh prison conditions, arbitrary arrests, selective prosecution, and denial of fair trial. Authorities interfered with privacy and engaged in pervasive monitoring of private communications. The government did not respect freedom of speech and the press; severely restricted Internet access and maintained a monopoly on media outlets; circumscribed academic freedoms; limited freedom of movement; and maintained significant restrictions on the ability of religious groups to meet and worship. The government refused to recognize independent human rights groups or permit them to function legally. In addition, the government continued to prevent workers from forming independent unions and abrogated workers' rights.

Most human rights abuses were official acts committed at the direction of the government. Impunity for the perpetrators remained widespread.

El Salvador

El Salvador is a constitutional multiparty republic. In March 2009 voters elected Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) as president for a five-year term in generally free and fair elections. Free and fair Legislative Assembly and municipal elections took place on March 11. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The principal human rights problems were widespread corruption, particularly in the judicial system; weaknesses in the judiciary and the security forces that led to a high level of impunity; violence, including domestic violence, and discrimination against women; and abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Other human rights problems included isolated unlawful killings and cruel treatment by security forces; lengthy pretrial detention; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; some restrictions on freedom of speech and press; trafficking in persons; and discrimination against persons with disabilities and persons with HIV/AIDS. There were also widespread discrimination and some violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons; child labor; and inadequate enforcement of labor laws.

Although the government took steps to dismiss some officials who committed abuses in the penitentiary system and the police, impunity persisted.

Eritrea

The government of the State of Eritrea is a highly centralized, authoritarian regime under the control of President Isaias Afwerki. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), headed by President Isaias, is the sole political party. There have been no elections since the country's independence from Ethiopia in 1993. Elements of the security forces sometimes acted independently of civilian control.

Unlawful killings by security forces continued, as did torture, harsh prison conditions, and incommunicado detention, which sometimes resulted in death. The government continued to force persons to participate in its national service program, often for periods of indefinite duration. The government also severely restricted civil liberties, including freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion.

Other abuses included: politically motivated disappearances; arbitrary arrest and detention, including of national service evaders; executive interference in the judiciary; detention of political prisoners and detainees; lack of due process and excessive pretrial detention; infringement of privacy rights; restrictions on academic freedom and cultural events; and limits on freedom of movement and travel. Abuse and discrimination against women and the Kunama ethnic group were a concern. The law criminalizes consensual same-sex activity. Child abuse, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), human trafficking, and forced child labor occurred. Government policies limited worker rights.

The government did not prosecute or punish officials who committed abuses, whether in the security services or elsewhere in the government. Impunity was the norm.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a federal republic. On August 20, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi died. The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) elected then deputy prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn to take Meles's place as chairman of the party. The EPRDF subsequently nominated him for the post of prime minister. On September 21, parliament elected Hailemariam as prime minister. In national parliamentary elections in 2010, the EPRDF and affiliated parties won 545 of 547 seats to remain in power for a fourth consecutive five-year term. Although the relatively few international officials allowed to observe the elections concluded technical aspects of the vote were handled competently, some also noted that an environment conducive to free and fair elections was not in place prior to the election.

Security forces generally reported to civilian authorities; however, there were instances in which special police and local militias acted independently of civilian control.

The most significant human rights problems included restrictions on freedom of expression and association through politically motivated trials and convictions of opposition political figures, activists, journalists, and bloggers, as well as increased restrictions on print media. In July security forces used force against and arrested Muslims who protested against alleged government interference in religious affairs. The government continued restrictions on civil society and nongovernmental organization (NGO) activities imposed by the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO).

Other human rights problems included arbitrary killings; allegations of torture, beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees by security forces; reports of harsh and at times life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; detention without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; a weak, overburdened judiciary subject to political influence; infringement on citizens' privacy rights, including illegal searches; allegations of abuses in the implementation of the government's "villagization" program; restrictions on academic freedom; restrictions on freedom of assembly, association, and movement; alleged interference in religious affairs; limits on citizens' ability to change their government; police, administrative, and judicial corruption; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities; clashes between ethnic minorities; discrimination against persons based on their sexual orientation and against persons with HIV/AIDS; limits on worker rights; forced labor; and child labor, including forced child labor.

Impunity was a problem. The government, with some reported exceptions, generally did not take steps to prosecute or otherwise punish officials who committed abuses other than corruption.

Factions of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), an ethnically based, violent, and fragmented separatist group operating in the Somali Region, were responsible for abuses. Members of the separatist Afar Revolutionary Democratic Union Front (ARDUF) claimed responsibility for a January attack on a group of foreign tourists in the Afar Region.

Guatemala

Guatemala is a multiparty constitutional republic. In November 2011 Otto Perez Molina of the Patriot Party won the presidential election for a four-year term that began in January. International observers considered the election generally free and fair. In some instances members of the security forces acted independently of civilian control.

Principal human rights abuses included widespread institutional corruption, particularly in the police and judicial sectors; police and military involvement in serious crimes, including unlawful killings, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and extortion; and societal violence, including violence against women and numerous killings. Considerable violence was attributed to gangs and narcotics-trafficking organizations; however, corruption and inadequate investigation and prosecution of such crimes made factual attribution for crimes difficult.

Human rights abuses also included abuse and mistreatment by National Civil Police (PNC) members; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; failure of the judicial system to ensure full and timely investigations and fair trials; failure to protect judicial sector officials, witnesses, and civil society representatives from intimidation; threats, intimidation, and killings of journalists and trade unionists; discrimination and abuse of persons with disabilities; sexual harassment and discrimination against women; child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation of children; and trafficking in persons. Other problems included marginalization of indigenous communities and ineffective demarcation of their lands; discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; and ineffective enforcement of labor and child labor laws.

The government cooperated with the UN-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and took steps to prosecute officials who committed abuses. However, impunity continued to be widespread.

Honduras

Honduras is a constitutional, multiparty republic. Following November 2009 elections, which international observers generally recognized as free and fair, Porfirio “Pepe” Lobo assumed the presidency in January 2010 and formed a government of national unity including all five registered political parties. Security forces reported to civilian authorities, but there were instances in which elements within the security forces acted independently of civilian control.

Among the most serious human rights problems were unlawful and arbitrary killings by police and others, corruption and institutional weakness of the justice system, and harsh and at times life-threatening prison conditions.

There continued to be reports of killings in the Bajo Aguan region of agricultural workers, bystanders, private security guards, and security forces related to land disputes, organized crime, and other factors. Other human rights problems included violence against detainees; lengthy pretrial detentions and failure to provide due process of law; harassment of journalists; corruption in government; violence against and harassment of women; child prostitution and abuse; trafficking in persons; encroachment on indigenous lands and discrimination against indigenous and Afro-descendent communities; violence against and harassment of LGBT persons; ineffective enforcement of labor laws; and child labor.

The government took steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed abuses. However, corruption and impunity were serious problems that impeded the effectiveness of the National Police.

Organized criminal elements were significant perpetrators of violent crimes in the country and committed acts of murder, extortion, kidnapping, torture, human trafficking, and intimidation of journalists and human rights defenders.

Mexico

Mexico is a multiparty federal republic with an elected president and bicameral legislature. On July 1, citizens elected President Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to a six-year term in generally free and fair multiparty elections; Peña Nieto took office on December 1. Security forces reported to civilian authorities; however, there were instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of civilian control.

Significant human rights-related problems included police and military involvement in serious abuses, including unlawful killings, physical abuse, torture, and disappearances. Widespread impunity and corruption remained serious problems, particularly at the state level, in the security forces, and in the judicial sector. Violence attributed to transnational and local criminal organizations, violence against women, and violence against journalists that limited freedom of expression persisted.

The following problems were reported during the year by the country's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) and other sources: kidnappings; physical abuse; harsh, overcrowded prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; and confessions coerced through torture. Additionally, there were reports of threats and violence against human rights defenders; kidnapping, robbery and abuse of migrants; domestic violence; trafficking in persons; abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons and people with disabilities; social and economic discrimination against some members of the indigenous population; and exploitation of child labor.

Despite some arrests for corruption, widespread impunity for human rights abuses by officials remained a problem in both civilian and military jurisdictions.

Monaco

The Principality of Monaco is a constitutional monarchy in which the sovereign prince plays the leading governmental role. The prince appoints the government consisting of a minister of state and five counselors. The prince shares the country's legislative power with the popularly elected National Council. Multiparty elections for the National Council in 2008 were considered free and fair. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

There were no reports of widespread or systemic human rights abuses.

The electoral system allows citizens to change many aspects of their government, but there is no constitutional provision to allow the citizens to change the monarchical nature of the government.

The government punished officials who committed abuses.

Panama

Panama is a multiparty constitutional democracy. In 2009 voters chose Ricardo A. Martinelli Berrocal as president in national elections that international and domestic observers considered generally free and fair. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The principal human rights abuses were harsh prison conditions, judicial ineffectiveness, attacks on freedom of expression, and discrimination against various groups and individuals, including some cases of violence.

Other human rights abuses reported included prolonged pretrial detention, corruption, violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, conflicts with indigenous people regarding decisions affecting indigenous lands, and child labor.

The government prosecuted few alleged cases of corruption or abuse of authority by government officials, leaving a widespread perception of impunity.

Peru

Peru is a constitutional, multiparty republic. Ollanta Humala Tasso of the Peruvian Nationalist Party (part of the Gana Peru electoral alliance) won the June 2011 national elections in a vote widely considered free and fair. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The most serious human rights problems included violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and corruption that undermined the application of the law.

The following human rights problems also were reported: security force killings of protesters during demonstrations, harsh prison conditions, abuse of detainees and inmates by prison security forces, lengthy pretrial detention and inordinate trial delays, intimidation of the media, incomplete registration of internally displaced persons, and discrimination against women. There also was discrimination against individuals with disabilities; members of racial and ethnic minority groups; indigenous persons; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons; and persons with HIV/AIDS. Other problems were a lack of labor law enforcement and the exploitation of child labor, particularly in informal sectors.

The government took steps to investigate and in some cases prosecute or otherwise punish public officials who committed abuses. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

The terrorist organization Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) was responsible for killings and other human rights abuses, including recruitment of child soldiers, extortion, hostage taking, and intimidation.

Russia

The Russian Federation has a highly centralized political system, with power increasingly concentrated in the president, and a weak multiparty political system. The bicameral Federal Assembly consists of a lower house (State Duma) and upper house (Federation Council). Presidential elections in March featured accusations of government interference and manipulation of the electoral process. Security forces generally reported to civilian authorities; however, in some areas of the Northern Caucasus, there were serious problems with civilian control.

The most significant human rights problems during the year involved:

1. Restrictions of Civil Liberties: Following increased mobilization of civil society and mass demonstrations in reaction to elections, the government introduced a series of measures limiting political pluralism. During the year Russia adopted laws that impose harsh fines for unsanctioned meetings; identify nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as “foreign agents” if they engage in “political activity” while receiving foreign funding; suspend NGOs that have U.S. citizen members or receive U.S. support and are engaged in “political activity” or “pose a threat to Russian interests”; recriminalize libel; allow authorities to block Web sites without a court order; and significantly expand the definition of treason. Media outlets were pressured to alter their coverage or to fire reporters and editors critical of the government.

2. Violations of Electoral Processes: Domestic and international observers described the presidential campaign as skewed in favor of the ruling party’s candidate, Vladimir Putin. Procedural irregularities marred voting, with reports of vote fraud, administrative measures disadvantaging the opposition, and pressure on election monitoring groups. Several gubernatorial elections in October were likewise criticized.

3. Administration of Justice: Due process was denied during the detentions and trials of protesters arrested following the May 6 demonstration in Moscow in which a small group of the protestors engaged in violence; in the detention, trial, and sentencing of the members of the punk rock group Pussy Riot, who were charged with hooliganism motivated by religious hatred; and searches and criminal cases lodged against several political activists. Individuals responsible for the deaths of prominent journalists, activists, and whistleblowers, notably Sergey Magnitskiy, have yet to be brought to justice.

Other problems reported during the year included: allegations of torture and excessive force by law enforcement officials; life-threatening prison conditions; interference in the judiciary and the right to a fair trial; abridgement of the right to privacy; restrictions on minority religions; widespread corruption; societal and official intimidation of civil society and labor activists; limitations on the rights of workers; trafficking in persons; attacks on migrants and select religious and ethnic minorities; and discrimination against and limitation of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons.

The government failed to take adequate steps to prosecute or punish most officials who committed abuses, resulting in a climate of impunity. Rule of law was particularly deficient in the North Caucasus, where conflict among government forces, insurgents, Islamist militants, and criminal forces led to numerous human rights abuses, including killings, torture, physical abuse, and politically motivated abductions.

Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy ruled by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, who is both head of state and head of government. The government bases its legitimacy on its interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law) and the

1992 Basic Law, which specifies that the rulers of the country shall be male descendants of the founder King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud. The Basic Law sets out the system of governance, rights of citizens, and powers and duties of the government, and it provides that the Quran and Sunna (the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) serve as the country's constitution. In September 2011 the country held elections on a nonparty basis for half of the 1,632 seats on the 285 municipal councils around the country. Independent polling station observers identified no irregularities with the election; however, women were not candidates and did not vote. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The most important human rights problems reported included citizens' lack of the right and legal means to change their government; pervasive restrictions on universal rights such as freedom of expression, including on the Internet, and freedom of assembly, association, movement, and religion; and a lack of equal rights for women, children, and expatriate workers.

Other human rights problems reported included torture and other abuses; overcrowding in prisons and detention centers; holding political prisoners and detainees; denial of due process; arbitrary arrest and detention; and arbitrary interference with privacy, home, and correspondence. Violence against women, trafficking in persons, and discrimination based on gender, religion, sect, race, and ethnicity were common. Lack of governmental transparency and access made it difficult to assess the magnitude of many reported human rights problems.

The government identified, prosecuted, and punished a limited number of officials who committed abuses, particularly those engaged in or complicit with corruption. Some members of the security forces and other senior officials, including those linked to the royal family, reportedly committed abuses with relative impunity.

Somalia

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) completed the September 2011 Roadmap for Ending the Transition during the year, partnering with representatives of Puntland, Galmuduug, Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), and the international community. Completion of the roadmap included drafting a provisional federal constitution, forming an 825-member National Constituent Assembly (NCA) that ratified the provisional constitution, selecting a 275-member federal parliament, and holding speakership and presidential elections. On May 5, clan elders convened in Mogadishu to nominate NCA delegates and members of the federal parliament. On August 1, the NCA ratified the provisional federal constitution. The federal parliament was inaugurated on August 20. On August 28, parliament elected Professor Mohamed Sheikh Osman (Jawari) as speaker. On September 10, parliament elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Former TFG president and 2012 presidential candidate Sheikh Sharif deemed the presidential vote to be fair and conceded defeat. Neither the TFG nor the newly established government had effective control over some parts of the country, and essential governance functions were provided by regional administrations, if at all, including by the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in the northwest and Puntland State in the northeast. There were instances in which elements of the Somali security forces acted independently of civilian control.

Civilians continued to suffer from conflict-related abuses, including killings, displacement, and the diversion or confiscation of humanitarian assistance by armed groups, principally al-Shabaab--a terrorist organization. According

to the UN, there were more than 1.36 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country, and more than one million persons had taken refuge in other countries by the middle of the year.

Severe human rights abuses included killings; restrictions on freedom of the press, including violence against and targeted assassinations of journalists; and discrimination and violence against women and girls, including rape and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

Other major human rights abuses included harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary and politically motivated arrest and detention; denial of a fair trial; corruption; trafficking in persons; abuse of and discrimination against minority clans; restrictions on workers' rights; forced labor; and child labor.

In general impunity remained the norm, particularly in the south and central regions. Governmental authorities took some steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed abuses, particularly military and police officials accused of committing rape, murder, and extortion of civilians.

Al-Shabaab retained control of some rural areas of the south and central regions, but lost control over all major population centers it previously controlled. Al-Shabaab continued to commit grave abuses. It attacked towns where its forces had withdrawn or been defeated by Somali National, African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Ethiopian, and TFG-allied forces. Al-Shabaab committed abuses including extrajudicial killings; disappearances; cruel and unusual punishment; rape; restrictions on civil liberties and freedom of movement; restrictions on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian assistance; and conscription and use of child soldiers.

Sudan

Sudan is a republic with power concentrated in the hands of authoritarian President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and his inner circle. The National Congress Party (NCP) continued to control the government, continuing more than 23 years of near absolute political authority. The country last held national elections in April 2010, the first multiparty elections in 24 years. The elections, which several opposition parties boycotted, did not meet international standards. Observers reported restriction of civil liberties, intimidation, threats of violence, lack of transparency in vote tabulation, and other problems. Voters reelected the president and gave the NCP 323 of 450 seats in the National Assembly. There were instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of civilian control, especially in the Darfur Region.

The most important human rights abuses included: government forces and government-aligned groups committed extrajudicial and other unlawful killings; security forces committed torture, beatings, rape, and other cruel and inhumane treatment or punishment; and prison and detention center conditions were harsh and life threatening.

Other major abuses included arbitrary arrest; incommunicado and prolonged pretrial detention; executive interference with the judiciary and denial of due process; obstruction of humanitarian assistance; restriction on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement; harassment of internally displaced persons; restrictions on privacy; harassment and closure of human rights organizations; and violence and discrimination against women. Societal abuses including instances of female genital mutilation; child abuse, including sexual

violence and recruitment of child soldiers; trafficking in persons; violence against ethnic minorities; denial of workers' rights; and forced and child labor were also reported.

Except in rare cases, the government took no steps to prosecute or punish officials in the security services and elsewhere in the government who committed abuses. Security force impunity remained a serious problem.

Conflict between government and rebel forces in Darfur, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan states continued. Rebels also committed abuses in Darfur and Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states (the Two Areas).

Taiwan

Taiwan is governed by a president and a parliament selected in multiparty elections. In March 2008 voters elected as President Ma Ying-jeou of the Kuomintang Party (KMT) in an election that international observers considered to be free and fair. Ma was reelected to a second four-year term in 2012 in an election that was also considered to be free and fair. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

Principal human rights problems reported during the year were corruption and violence against women and children.

During the first seven months of the year, authorities indicted 576 officials, including 40 high-ranking officials, on corruption charges. There were no reports of impunity.

Thailand

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with a revered king who has traditionally exerted strong influence. A coalition government led by Yingluck Shinawatra and her Puea Thai (For Thais) Party came to power in August 2011 following national elections in July for the National Assembly lower house that were generally viewed as free and fair. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The most persistent human rights problems included abuses by government security forces and local defense volunteers in the context of the continuing Muslim separatist insurgency in the South; the continued reported use at times of excessive force by security forces, including police killing, torturing, and otherwise abusing criminal suspects, detainees, and prisoners; and continued government limits on freedom of speech and press.

Other human rights problems included continued poor, overcrowded, and unsanitary prison and detention facilities; occasional arbitrary arrests and detention; government limits on freedom of assembly; insufficient protection for vulnerable populations, including refugees; violence and discrimination against women; sex tourism; sexual exploitation of children; trafficking in persons; discrimination against persons with disabilities, minorities, hill tribe members, and foreign migrant workers; child labor; and some limitations on worker rights.

Authorities occasionally dismissed, arrested, prosecuted, and convicted security force members who committed abusive behavior, but official impunity continued to be a serious problem, especially in provinces where the 2005 Emergency Decree, the 2008 Internal Security Act, and martial law remained invoked.

In the southernmost provinces, the great majority of victims of the violence associated with the separatist insurgency were civilians not taking an active part in hostilities.

Venezuela

Venezuela is formally a multiparty constitutional republic. On October 7, voters reelected Hugo Chavez as president. Domestic election observers cited few irregularities on election day. Some groups noted the incumbent's use of state resources created an unlevel electoral playing field. The process leading to the election heavily favored the candidacy of incumbent President Chavez. The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) electoral "companion" mission described the elections as free and fair. In regional elections on December 16, voters elected 23 governors in elections that domestic election observers characterized as relatively free of widespread fraud but again noted the use of state resources for government candidates. There were some instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of civilian control.

The principal human rights abuses reported during the year included corruption, inefficiency, and politicization in the judicial system; government actions to impede freedom of expression; and harsh and life-threatening prison conditions. The government did not respect judicial independence or permit judges to act according to the law without fear of retaliation. The government used the judiciary to intimidate and selectively prosecute political, union, business, and civil society leaders who were critical of government policies or actions. The government harassed and intimidated privately owned television stations, other media outlets, and journalists throughout the year, using threats, fines, property seizures, targeted regulations, and criminal investigations and prosecutions. Failure to provide for due process rights, physical safety, and humane conditions for inmates contributed to widespread violence, riots, injuries, and deaths in prisons.

In addition, the following human rights problems were reported by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the media, and in some cases the government itself: unlawful killings, including summary killings by rogue police elements; torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; inadequate juvenile detention centers; arbitrary arrests and detentions; corruption and impunity in police forces; political prisoners; interference with privacy rights; corruption at all levels of government; threats against domestic NGOs; violence against women; anti-Semitism in the official media; trafficking in persons; violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity; and restrictions on workers' right of association.

The government sometimes took steps to punish lower-ranking officials who committed abuses, but there were no investigations or prosecutions of senior officials for alleged corruption or abuses.

Vietnam

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is an authoritarian state ruled by a single party, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), led by General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, and President Truong Tan Sang. The most recent National Assembly elections, held in May 2011, were neither free nor fair. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The most significant human rights problems in the country continued to be severe government restrictions on citizens' political rights, particularly their right to change their government; increased measures to limit citizens' civil liberties; and corruption in the judicial system and police.

Specific human rights abuses included continued police mistreatment of suspects during arrest and detention, including the use of lethal force as well as austere prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention for political activities; and denial of the right to a fair and expeditious trial. Political influence, endemic corruption, and inefficiency continued to distort the judicial system significantly. The government increasingly limited freedoms of speech and press and suppressed dissent; further restricted Internet freedom; reportedly continued to be involved in attacks against Web sites containing criticism; maintained spying on dissident bloggers; and continued to limit privacy rights and freedoms of assembly, association, and movement. Vietnamese who exercise their right to freedom of religion continued to be subject to harassment, differing interpretations and applications of the law, and inconsistent legal protection, especially at provincial and village levels. Police corruption persisted at various levels. The government maintained its prohibition of independent human rights organizations. Violence and discrimination against women as well as trafficking in persons continued, as did gender-biased sex selection and sexual exploitation of children. There was also some societal discrimination based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV/AIDS status. The government maintained limits on workers' rights to form and join independent unions and did not enforce safe and healthy working conditions adequately. Child labor persisted.

The government inconsistently took steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed abuses, and members of the police sometimes acted with impunity.