

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Human Rights Depend on Courageous Individuals, Secretary Kerry Says

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 27 February 2014

Washington – “Some of the greatest accomplishments in expanding the cause of human rights have come not because of legislative decree or judicial fiat, but they came through the awesomely courageous acts of individuals,” says Secretary of State John Kerry.

In comments made February 27 upon the release of the 2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Kerry said that “the fundamental struggle for dignity, for decency in the treatment of human beings between each other and between states and citizens, is a driving force in all of human history.”

The reports – now in their 38th year – document human rights violations and abuses in almost 200 distinct countries and territories. Based on input from U.S. embassies, human rights activists, nongovernmental organizations and other sources, the country reports are mandated by the U.S. Congress to help guide U.S. government policy and foreign assistance. The reports also serve as a reference for other governments, international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, legal professionals, scholars, interested citizens and journalists.

“We know that we're not perfect,” Kerry said of human rights in the United States. “We don't speak with any arrogance whatsoever, but with a concern for the human condition. Our own journey has not been without great difficulty and, at times, contradiction. But even as we remain humble about the challenges of our own history, we are proud that no country has more opportunity to advance the cause of democracy and no country is as committed to the cause of human rights as we are.”

The annual human rights report, Kerry emphasized, “is not just some high-minded exercise. This is the most comprehensive, authoritative, dispassionate and factual review of the state of human rights globally, and every American should be proud of it.”

With the latest reports, which cover 2013, the United States joins with many other nations in reaffirming its commitment “to a world where speaking one's mind does not lead to prosecution and where professing one's love does not lead to persecution, a world where practicing or changing one's faith does not lead to imprisonment and where marching peacefully in the street does not get you beaten up in a blind alley or even killed in plain sight,” Kerry said.

According to a State Department fact sheet released along

with the reports, the most noteworthy human rights developments in 2013 were:

- Increased crackdowns by governments on civil society and restrictions on the freedoms of association and assembly.
- Restrictions by governments on freedom of speech and press freedom.
- Abuses by government security forces that engaged with impunity in unlawful arrests and extrajudicial killings.
- Lack of effective labor rights protections.
- The continued marginalization of vulnerable groups, including religious and ethnic minorities, women and children, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons, and persons with disabilities.

## No U.S. Visas for Those Involved In Sexual Violence, Secretary Kerry Says

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 26 February 2014

Washington – Anyone involved in sexual violence in times of armed conflict will not receive a U.S. visa, says Secretary of State John Kerry.

Kerry made the announcement during a February 25 public discussion at the State Department on preventing sexual violence in conflict situations.

“No one, and I mean no one at the highest level of military or governance, who has presided over or engaged in or knew of or conducted these kinds of attacks is ever going to receive a visa to travel into the United States of America from this day forward,” Kerry said. Every U.S. Embassy and post around the world, he said, will be alerted to this injunction and report incidents of sexual violence in conflict situations.

“There has to be a price attached” to sexual violence, Kerry said, and denying visas to perpetrators of sexual violence is “one of the things we need to do.”

The State Department event brought together United Kingdom Foreign Secretary William Hague, Catherine M. Russell, the U.S. ambassador-at-large for global women's issues, Anne C. Richard, U.S. assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration, and U.N. Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Bangura to discuss ways to end what Kerry described as the “depravity and the extraordinary violence of rape as a tool of war.”

The extent of war zone rape has been documented around the world, according to Hague. Preventing that type of violence, he said, is “a crucial moral cause of our times” as well as “a fundamental part of conflict prevention.”

To reinforce global commitment to ending wartime sexual violence, Hague said he will host a global summit on the issue in London this June. The meeting, he said, "will be like no summit ever before."

The summit, Hague said, "is going to go on around the clock, around the world. It is going to be open to the public. It is going to communicate digitally with people in every continent of the world. We are going to involve militaries, judiciaries." Governments, Hague said, will be asked to take practical steps to end sexual violence, such as deploying teams of experts to areas that help to gather evidence and make sure prosecutions can take place.

Bangura said 140 countries have signed a U.N. declaration on ending sexual violence. The global legal framework is in place, she said, and the challenge now is how to ensure that governments take responsibility to implement the U.N. agreement. She also cited the stigma attached to victims of sexual violence and "a culture of silence" in many societies. "There's a reluctance for people to report and to deal with it if they don't have the support," Bangura said.

Russell said one of the biggest challenges in ending wartime sexual violence is making sure people understand that there will be consequences for this crime. She cited the effectiveness of "mobile courts" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where rape has been especially prevalent during armed conflicts.

"For these DRC cases," Russell said, "we have judges or Congolese prosecutors, judges who go out and they travel around, and they hear the cases in the communities. It takes two weeks for a case to be heard, and justice is meted out immediately. People see the justice happen in front of them. People who have committed these cases, who never believed they would be prosecuted, are prosecuted."

"That sort of thing makes a difference," Russell said, by building both a judicial infrastructure and public trust in the judicial system.

Acknowledging that public attitudes about sexual violence may be hard to change in some societies, Kerry said the challenge is not insurmountable.

"The way we will make a difference on this issue is, frankly, by heeding the example of people who've gone before us who broke the back of slavery and other oppressive acts that were being applied to the life of people in various times in history," Kerry said. People need "to take risks as a matter of moral conscience in order to be able to make the difference," he said.

## Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Countries Around the World

26 February 2014

*This blog post by Evan M. Ryan was originally published on the State Department website on February 20. Ryan serves as the assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs.*

## Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Countries Around the World

By Evan M. Ryan

The events recounted in the new movie *The Monuments Men* are unfolding every day around the world. It's a little less dramatic, but the work by the State Department to preserve, protect and recover works of art is as vital today as it was in World War II.

Today's villains are more likely to be transnational organized crime syndicates that traffic in antiquities that fetch big dollars on the black market. But threats also come from conflicts and natural disasters.

So the department has a team of experts whose sole job is to care for and protect the cultural heritage of countries around the world. The art historians, archaeologists, and architectural historians of the Cultural Heritage Center, part of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, don't carry guns, but these new soldiers of diplomacy work on the frontlines to restore a country's archaeological wealth. They provide expert guidance in protecting and restoring sites and work with international law enforcement to prevent looted items from entering the United States.

For instance, soon after the looting of the Iraq Museum in 2003, Cultural Heritage Center personnel were on the scene delivering equipment, furniture and administrative supplies. Eleven of the museum's public galleries, a three-story storage facility and the conservation labs were renovated and a new roof and upgraded climate control systems were installed. At the site of ancient Babylon, the Center started major conservation work on an important temple and the world-famous Ishtar Gate. In Erbil, these professionals established a preservation education center, so future generations of Iraqi experts can care for these sites.

In other cases, monuments and archaeological sites damaged by conflict or natural disasters are preserved through the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. Grants from the Ambassadors Fund have supported efforts in countries throughout the world, including Afghanistan, Haiti, Peru, Jordan, Mongolia, and Uganda. In Libya, efforts are underway to document and assess archaeological sites in the regions under conflict. In

Thailand, a major, multi-year project is underway to document and conserve Wat Chaiwathanaram (Wat Chai), a 17th-century Buddhist monument in the former Kingdom of Siam. A cornerstone of Thai cultural identity and popular tourist destination, Wat Chai was seriously damaged during Thailand's disastrous monsoon floods in the fall of 2011.

A key part of the job is preventing looted archaeological treasures from coming into the United States. In response to well-documented widespread looting of archaeological sites and historic buildings in Syria, the Center worked with the International Council of Museums to develop the "Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk." The Red List, which illustrates representative types of Syrian artifacts, is a tool to assist customs, police, dealers, and collectors in identifying potentially looted Syrian objects. Artifacts recovered in the United States are returned to their country of origin. Just recently, Deputy Secretary Bill Burns returned a Khmer statue to Cambodia.

This week, the experts of the Cultural Heritage Center met with the actors and producers of *The Monuments Men* at a White House screening of the film. The actors noted how their modern-day counterparts embody the spirit and the work exemplified by the soldiers of the film. They work together with other government agencies, museums and organizations to preserve our shared world heritage. As a vital tool of foreign policy, their efforts strengthen the foundation of our bilateral relationships, protect a country's cultural identity, and support economic growth.

### **Effective Water Management Can Prevent Conflict, USAID Says**

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 25 February 2014

Washington — Countries with unreliable supplies of water are more vulnerable to conflict, according to a new report from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The report, called the Water and Conflict Toolkit, was released February 24 at the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington. It says that conflict is often generated by competition over water and other natural resources. Effective water management can bring disputing parties together to prevent conflict and foster reconciliation, it says.

The Water and Conflict Toolkit is meant to be a resource for aid and development workers in fragile and conflict-affected areas, says Melissa Brown, director of USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation. In the introduction, Brown says that the report can guide workers in evaluating the risk of conflict in an area and the potential for negotiating peace and building resilience.

The report says that population growth and movement to urban areas pose significant challenges to governing water infrastructure. As demand for water grows, competition will likely increase if per capita freshwater availability is not effectively and fairly managed, it says.

Effective water management also should take into account factors like intense agricultural and industrial demands and needs to share water supply fluctuation and water safety data, the report says.

"Effectively sharing water information during emergencies such as floods or severe contamination is crucial for protecting human and environmental health and managing perceptions of insecurity in tense and tenuous circumstances," the report says.

Also affecting water management is the issue of the lack of transparency about water rights and private sector contracts that can mask preferential treatment or corrupt governance, the report says. "Corruption can increase marginalization and exploitation of disadvantaged and vulnerable populations," it notes.

Other factors that affect water availability, quality and access are traditional practices, water politics, upstream and downstream flows, pollution, climate change and natural disasters, the report says. It says that low resilience to environmental disruptions can lower economic productivity, trigger unemployment and damage public perceptions of the competence of government institutions.

"Water is a shared interest even in deeply divided communities and regions," Chris Kosnik, acting director of USAID's Office of Water, said at the Wilson Center. As well, "water can be a powerful connector encouraging cooperation and negotiation in lieu of competition or violence," he said.

He said that for the first time, beginning in 2014, USAID has had a water strategy. The five-year effort aims to ensure that 10 million more people will have improved access to drinking water, 6 million people will gain improved access to sanitation, and another 3 million people will get access to improved agricultural productivity.

The report urges countries to build formal and informal institutional relationships of collaboration on water monitoring, management and investment. It says that they should make access to clean water more affordable and equitable, enhance citizen knowledge about water as a resource and water use, improve citizens' communications with policymakers, and take into account the potential for conflict around access.

"Fair and effective water resource management is a concern of everyone," Brown said.

### **USAID Supports Launch of New Forest Watch Tool**

24 February 2014

Washington – How is the latest U.S. satellite and mobile technology helping 350 million of the world's poorest people – including 60 million indigenous people – safeguard their homes and livelihoods?

More than 300 development experts heard the answer at the February 21 launch of Global Forest Watch, a new tropical forest monitoring tool developed by World Resources Institute with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Norway, Google and other partners.

"Global Forest Watch is democratizing information," USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said at the Newseum's Knight Conference Center in Washington.

Juan Carlos Jintiach, a leader of Ecuador's Shuar Nation of peoples, agreed. "Global Forest Watch is a way to share our voices and histories," he told the crowd.

Global Forest Watch does much more than share stories, USAID says. The tool combines satellite imagery and overlay maps with the latest open data and crowd-sourcing technologies to provide near-real-time information about the state of tropical forests to anyone with an Internet connection. Currently, tropical forests are being destroyed at a rate of about 50 soccer fields per minute.

The loss of tropical forests is a big problem for the Earth's climate, causing up to a fifth of the carbon pollution linked to climate change. It's also an immediate threat to the health and well-being of an estimated 1 billion people around the world, who depend on forests for food or livelihood activities, USAID says.

Continued forest destruction could even mean death for more than 350 million of the world's very poorest people – those who use forests intensively for subsistence and survival, USAID says. This number includes some 60 million indigenous people, among them a small number of tribes in the deepest reaches of forest who have yet to be contacted by modern civilization.

Global Forest Watch unites more than 40 government, business and civil society partners to curb forest destruction by putting free and transparent information in the hands of people who care most about forests. Anyone with an Internet connection can visit the GFW website and upload information about what is happening in a section of forest. Any government also can visit the

GFW website and find information about what is happening in its forest territory.

"Now governments and people will have access to the same information" as private companies, said Felipe Calderón, Mexico's former president, who spoke at the February 20 GFW launch.

GFW partners and supporters include many of the same partners of the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020, a private-public partnership launched by the United States and the Consumer Goods Forum network of more than 400 global businesses in 2012. USAID contributed \$5.5 million to GFW, in the process helping to mobilize more than \$30 million.

### **U.S. Defense, Commerce Secretaries on the U.S. Commitment to Asia**

21 February 2014

*This opinion editorial by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker was published in the February 19 Wall Street Journal. There are no republication restrictions.*

#### **America is Committed to Asia**

By Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel

For decades, security and prosperity have flourished throughout the Asia-Pacific region, each reinforcing the other. The astounding growth of trade and industry across the Pacific Rim has transformed nations and lifted millions of people out of poverty, surpassing all expectations while strengthening many crucial relationships.

This progress was no accident. America's security presence in the region and our strong alliances, economic ties and people-to-people contact with nations like Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines have provided the necessary stability for Pacific nations to focus on giving their people a more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous future.

Today, as more and more of America's trade and defense activities shift toward the Asia-Pacific, and as the region undergoes dynamic changes with the rise of China, Indonesia and India, the United States Departments of Defense and Commerce are working side by side to help keep trends moving in the right direction and promote greater security and prosperity.

These efforts are particularly important because the Asia-Pacific region is confronting historical animosities and disputes that fuel tensions, increase uncertainty and risk wider conflict. These disagreements may begin with

sovereignty concerns, but they create risk for nations across the globe. For example, commercial and military vessels from around the world need to know where and how to operate safely throughout the region. Doubts can cause a ripple effect of negative consequences that range from wasted resources and delayed private investments to miscalculation and conflict—meaning that all Pacific nations would stand to lose far more than what any one country stands to gain.

Instead of letting these comparatively modest disagreements derail our significant progress, we need to get back to the business of doing business. Right now, there are three important areas where all nations of the region have the opportunity to benefit by working together—and where the Commerce and Defense Departments have important roles to play.

First, we should work to promote shared principles and fair rules of the road, both in the security and economic realms. In the commercial and economic realms, this means concluding negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a high-standard trade agreement that would support greater trade, investment and growth throughout the region.

In recent meetings in Singapore, the 12 TPP nations identified what we call "landing zones" on most of the outstanding issues, and we continue to make progress on market access issues with various countries. Our task now is to conclude negotiations on an agreement that reflects our common values and shared commitment to raising the standards for doing business across the Pacific.

In the security realm, it means creating a space where our militaries can better communicate intentions, work through difficult problems, and collaborate on common interests. The United States has already begun working with nations in the region, including China, to foster transparency and develop clear rules of the road in critical areas such as sea and air travel, space, cybersecurity and a code of conduct for the South China Sea. These efforts build habits of cooperation that can be expanded to other areas.

Second, Pacific nations must continue to cooperate with one another when disaster strikes. Natural disasters are among the most significant threats to security and prosperity in the region, putting countless lives and resources at risk every year.

One tragic example is the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan, which killed more than 6,000 people and could cost nearly \$13 billion in economic damage and lost production. The Department of Defense has prioritized humanitarian assistance and disaster relief cooperation in the region, which enabled the U.S. military to airlift nearly

20,000 survivors and deliver more than four million pounds of relief supplies and equipment to the Philippines. Many other Asian nations also contributed much-needed manpower, assets, supplies and funds to these efforts.

At the same time, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, part of the Commerce Department, continues to invest in warning systems that help prevent loss of life and property throughout the Pacific Rim. For example, NOAA has increased the number of buoys that help predict tsunamis to 29 from six over the past 10 years, while also helping countries like Australia and Indonesia install their own systems.

Third, we should continue to build international partnerships that simultaneously strengthen industry and defense relationships. This will not only help improve security, but also help create new economic opportunities. The Department of Defense has supported this by co-developing a new missile interceptor with Japan, which will be able to defeat the next generation of advanced ballistic missile threats and shows how leveraging collective technological expertise can help meet 21st century security challenges in a cost-effective way.

Meanwhile, the Departments of Defense, State and Commerce are rolling out reforms of the controls on the export of military items to our close partners and allies such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea. These changes will strengthen U.S. and regional security by increasing military interoperability with these allies while also enhancing our collective economic interests. Although we do not permit exports of military or military-related items to China, the United States will continue to encourage exports of high-tech commercial items to China for civilian purposes.

As part of the Obama administration's comprehensive strategy for rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific, the Departments of Defense and Commerce will intensify our dialogue with regional leaders and pursue innovative ways to collaborate. For example, in April, the Defense Department will host a meeting of the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations defense ministers in Hawaii, where the ministers will visit the Commerce Department's Inouye Regional Center, home to the bulk of NOAA's assets in Hawaii, and discuss ways to enhance humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts, among other issues.

The Asia-Pacific's dynamic growth cannot be taken for granted. Security, stability and prosperity require constant attention, a commitment to shared principles, and the combined efforts of the United States and all Asia-Pacific nations. When nations work together for the benefit of all their people, everything is possible.

## Syrian Crisis Is Humanitarian, Regional, Economic, U.S. Says

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 24 February 2014

Washington — The United States is delivering assistance to relieve the Syrian humanitarian crisis with “every means available,” according to a State Department official who outlined U.S. objectives to address the regional dilemma at a Washington forum February 21.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Kelly Clements described the region as a “highly insecure environment” where aid obstruction has occurred, assistance workers have been targeted and medical facilities attacked.

The U.N. Security Council voted February 22 to increase humanitarian aid access and demanded that Syrian authorities allow “rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access.” The resolution also called for a cessation of attacks on civilians and an end to the use of weapons in populated areas.

An estimated 9.3 million people in the region — 6.5 million still in Syria — are affected by the violence and need assistance, according to estimates compiled by international humanitarian agencies.

U.S. policymakers regard the Syrian civil war and the resulting impact on the region not just as a humanitarian crisis, but as a regional stability crisis in which economic output diminishes, people suffer and development progress regresses in some parts of the region. In Syria, notably, Clements said the nation’s development has lost 35 years of progress in three years of civil war.

“We’re really trying to bring all the spigots of U.S. government support” to the regional crisis, Clements said. Policymakers are also hoping to devise ways to help Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, the principal regional hosts of 2.4 million Syrians who have fled their homeland. Clements said they are looking for strategies to help ease impacts on health, education and employment with a focus on particularly affected populations, such as children and vulnerable women.

The U.S. government has invested more than \$1.7 billion in relieving the Syrian humanitarian crisis since it began.

Antoine Chedid, Lebanon’s ambassador to the United States, also participated in the discussion at the Brookings Institution where Clements spoke. Hosting more than 900,000 refugees in 1,600 communities, Lebanon has experienced a 30 percent population increase. The situation is becoming an “existential crisis” for a small country with pockets of extreme poverty of its own, he said.

“The impact is deep, dangerous and threatens to unravel the country economically, politically and socially,” Chedid said. While acknowledging the assistance Lebanon has already received from the United States, he said his nation must receive further international support to continue to provide haven for Syrian refugees.

Chedid further urged the international community to consider a proposal to house Syria’s displaced persons in facilities located in a Syrian safe zone.

Clements said the United States is working with the international community to devise long-term solutions for what is not a traditional humanitarian crisis. “Each host [country] has a different reality,” she said, and solutions must be targeted to their needs.

Clements spoke a day after she returned from discussions in Ankara about Turkey’s role as a host nation. More than 600,000 Syrians have found refuge there, welcomed by what Clements called “an exceptional government response.”

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