

Minister Junichiro Koizumi met with Musharraf and announced plans to send election monitors to Pakistan in October. Musharraf asked for Japan's help in urging India to resume dialogue on Kashmir.

Koizumi said Japan would "offer as much cooperation as possible" with the building of a tunnel in northwestern Pakistan (a project Japan previously financed), in addition to providing U.S.\$300 million in economic assistance by October 2003. Japan had suspended all new loans following Pakistan's nuclear tests, but restarted assistance in October 2001 to reward Pakistan's role in the anti-terrorism effort.

World Bank and Asian Development Bank

The World Bank provided Pakistan U.S.\$800 million in loans during the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2002. This included credit to support economic reforms and a three-year debt reduction strategy, and projects aimed at rural development and poverty reduction. The bank praised Pakistan's government for progress on economic reforms, but said that it still faced major challenges in order to bring about the country's "fundamental transformation—politically, economically, socially and with respect to gender—to a modern state."

The bank was preparing a project to assist with delivery of health services and education for HIV vulnerable populations in support of the government's national HIV/AIDS strategic framework.

After the September 11 attacks, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) boosted its funding to Pakistan to a record U.S.\$957 million in 2001. The ADB president, Tadao Chino, went to Pakistan in November 2001 and met with President Musharraf. Its projects targeted access to justice, reproductive health, agriculture, urban reform in Northwest Frontier Province, and support for a government action plan on curbing child labor.

RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORTS:

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VIETNAM

Despite promises by the general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) to accelerate the process of reform and promote democracy, Vietnam's human rights record continued to deteriorate during 2002. National Assembly elections conducted in May continued Vietnam's tradition of single party rule, while proponents of multi-party democracy, human rights, and religious freedom were arrested or closely monitored.

The government continued to stifle free expression and restrict the exercise of other basic human rights. Authorities destroyed thousands of banned publications, restricted press coverage of a key corruption scandal, increased the monitoring of the Internet, denied the general public access to international television programs broadcast by satellite, and arrested or detained dissidents who used the Internet or other public fora to publicize their ideas. The year saw the death of Vietnam's most well-known dissident, Tran Do, and the trial of Li Chi Quang, one of an emerging group of younger pro-democracy advocates in Vietnam.

Officials continued to suppress and control the activities of religious groups, including ethnic minority Christians in the northern and central highlands, members of the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, and Hoa Hao Buddhists in the south. Authorities made a new round of arrests of indigenous minority church leaders and land rights activists in the Central Highlands, the site of widespread unrest in 2001.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

The year saw an intensified crackdown on freedom of expression and use of the Internet. In January, the Ministry of Culture and Information (MoCI) instructed police to confiscate and destroy banned publications. On January 16, more than seven tons of books were burned in Ho Chi Minh City, including pornographic magazines, books published abroad, and books written by Vietnamese dissidents. In July, authorities in Hanoi destroyed 40,780 compact discs, 810 videotapes, 3,000 books, and six kilograms of other publications, including pornography and foreign-published books.

Two editions of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, published in Hong Kong, were banned in Vietnam: a July edition covering a major corruption scandal, and an August edition that reviewed a biography of Ho Chi Minh, which mentioned the leader's alleged love affairs.

The MoCI's Press Department refused to renew the press credentials of three editors at Tuoitre (Youth) newspaper, citing a "serious error in propaganda work." This appeared to be a reference to the publication of a survey of youth idols published by the paper. In the survey, U.S. President Bill Clinton scored higher than Prime Minister Phan Van Khai. The government destroyed 120,000 copies of the offending edition.

In April, the VCP Central Committee stated that publications and books with "wrongful" or "bad" contents would be banned and that party members whose words and actions were contrary to party principles would be dealt with severely. Government officials were instructed to list the classified information and state secrets that each official was responsible for safeguarding.

Domestic newspapers, and television and radio stations remained under government control. On June 18, the prime minister signed a decree restricting access to international television programs broadcast by satellite exclusively to government officials, state media, and foreigners. On June 20, the chief of the VCP's Central Ideology and Culture Board announced that the media should not "expose

secrets, create internal divisions, or hinder key propaganda tasks" in its coverage of the controversial Nam Cam corruption case, which was slated to go to court by year's end. Among the 151 people arrested in conjunction with the case, Vietnam's largest trial ever in terms of numbers of defendants, were twelve police officers, three former prosecutors, and two journalists.

In September, the government confiscated the passport of Vietnamese actor Don Duong, who was denounced by state media as a "lackey of hostile forces" because of his roles in two recent American films banned in Vietnam. In October, Vietnamese writer Duong Thu Huong was called a "national traitor" by *Cong An Thanh Pho* (Ho Chi Minh City Police) after she published an article in a Vietnamese newspaper in Australia stating that the war in Vietnam had not made its citizens more wise or bold in exercising their rights, but more cowardly.

In October, the MoCI issued a stern reprimand to Vietnam's state-operated printing houses for publishing books with anti-Communist content or that distorted Vietnam's history, and by re-printing dissident books originally published abroad.

In June, the prime minister instructed the MoCI to tighten up controls at Vietnam's four thousand public Internet cafés to prevent customers from accessing "state secrets," pornography, or "reactionary" documents. The government blocked approximately two thousand websites, including those of Vietnamese dissident groups based overseas.

In August, the MoCI ordered the closure of ttvonline.com, a popular web site operated by a Hanoi-based company, for operating an Internet site without official permission and publishing articles "contrary to the spirit" of the Press Law. On August 16, the MoCI stated that penalties would be imposed on Internet café owners who allowed customers to view web sites harmful to national security or that displayed "depraved" or "reactionary" content. In addition, Internet café owners would be required to obtain licenses and background checks before going into business. MoCI instructed Vietnam's only Internet gateway, the state-owned Vietnam Data Communications Co., to obstruct subversive web sites, based on lists of banned sites compiled by government ministries. In October, the MoCI ordered Vietnam's state-owned Internet service providers (ISP) to block politically and morally unacceptable web content.

Several dissidents and pro-democracy activists were arrested or harassed during the year after issuing public critiques of the government, some of which were circulated on the Internet. Several arrests occurred after dissidents visited the China-Vietnam border or publicly criticized recent bilateral border agreements between the two countries. Former army officer Nguyen Khac Toan, forty-six, was arrested on January 8, a day after meeting prominent dissident Nguyen Thanh Giang. On January 12, poet Bui Minh Quoc, 62, was put under administrative detention in Dalat on charges of possessing anti-government literature after he made a trip to the China-Vietnam border.

Li Chi Quang, thirty-two, a young lawyer whose essay "Beware of Imperialist China," was distributed on the Internet, was arrested at an Internet café in Hanoi on February 21. On October 28, he was sentenced to four years in prison after a half-day closed trial in Hanoi, on charges of disseminating propaganda against the

socialist state. Other dissidents and members of the foreign press corps were barred from observing the trial.

On March 10, scholar and anti-corruption activist Tran Van Khue, sixty-six, was arrested and placed under two years of administrative detention after he published a critical letter to Chinese President Jiang Zemin, which was circulated on the Internet. Then on March 27, police arrested Pham Hong Son, thirty-four, after he translated an article titled "What is Democracy," and sent it to his friends and senior Vietnamese officials. In addition, he had written an open letter, which was published on the Internet, protesting the fact that his house had been searched and his computer and documents confiscated.

With National Assembly elections slated for May, a growing number of dissidents called for multi-party reforms to counter Vietnam's one-party system. The electoral process is currently controlled by the VCP, which screens and approves all electoral candidates. In February, former VCP member and respected military veteran Pham Que Duong applied to run in the election. Local VCP officials rejected his candidacy, charging that he was a "dangerous element" and guilty of twenty crimes. Only fifty-one of the 498 National Assembly seats were won by non-VCP candidates.

In July and August, groups of prominent dissidents sent petitions to the government protesting the arrest and harassment of fellow dissidents and calling for democratic reforms, establishment of an anti-corruption body, creation of a constitutional court to examine violations in constitutional law, and publication of Vietnam's border treaties with China. On July 19, police detained one of the signers, Nguyen Vu Binh, thirty-four, and searched his house. Formerly a journalist at the *Tap Chi Cong San* (Communist Review), Nguyen resigned his position in 2000 and announced plans to form an independent political party. Nguyen was arrested in Hanoi on September 25 and expected to go to trial by year's end.

On September 20, public security officials raided the Ho Chi Minh City home of human rights advocate Nguyen Dan Que, confiscating his papers and documents and pressuring him to leave with the police for further questioning. Que refused to leave when the police could not produce a court order for his arrest. Ten security officials were subsequently stationed outside his home.

Five Vietnamese writers received Hellman/Hammett awards from Human Rights Watch in 2002 in recognition of the courage with which they faced political persecution: Le Chi Quang, Nguyen Dan Que, Nguyen Vu Binh, Ven. Thich Quang Do, and Tran Van Khue.

Religious Repression

Repression against the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) continued during the year. UBCV Supreme Patriarch Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, eighty-three, remained under tight surveillance at a pagoda in Quang Ngai province, where his health continued to deteriorate. Venerable Thich Quang Do remained under administrative detention in Ho Chi Minh City. UBCV monk and former political prisoner Venerable Thich Tri Luc, who fled to Cambodia in April, was "disappeared" from Phnom Penh in July, shortly after receiving refugee status from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Cambodia. The U.N. High

Commissioner for Human Rights and international rights organizations expressed concerns about the safety of Thich Tri Luc who was feared to have been forcibly returned to Vietnam and imprisoned.

Members of the Hoa Hao sect of Buddhism, one of the six officially authorized religions in Vietnam, continued to face problems. In January, the An Giang provincial court sentenced Hoa Hao Buddhist member Bui Van Hue to three years in prison for violating a 1999 administrative detention order and illegally leaving Vietnam after being extradited from Cambodia. In April, Hoa Hao Buddhist monk Le Minh Triet was placed under two years' administrative detention after completing an eight-year prison sentence in Thuan Hai province. Le Quang Liem, the leader of the Hoa Hao sect, remained under administrative detention in Ho Chi Minh City. In November, police officers dispersed a two-week protest by Hoa Hao followers at Quang Minh Tu temple in An Giang province, who had resisted an order to remove the gate to their temple. Several Hoa Hao Buddhists were reportedly beaten and briefly detained in a confrontation with police.

Evangelical Protestants, particularly those worshipping in house churches, remained under surveillance. In July, Protestant house church leader Nguyen Dang Chi was detained in Dong Nai province in the south, reportedly for preaching without official approval. After villagers protested outside the police station where he was being held, police released Nguyen.

Ethnic Hmong and Tai Christians in the north, particularly in Lai Chau and Lao Cai provinces, were beaten, detained, and pressured by local authorities to renounce their religion and cease Christian gatherings. In February, reports were received that the security presence had been increased in border communes in Muong Lay District, Lai Chau, where Hmong Christians were prohibited from gathering for religious ceremonies and some chapels were dismantled. On August 7, Hmong Christian Mua Bua Senh died in Dien Bien Dong District, Lai Chau, after numerous beatings by police officers for refusing to renounce his religion. In October, the officially-recognized Evangelical Church of Vietnam (North) admitted several hundred Hmong Christian churches, providing some measure of protection against persecution. Nonetheless, at least twelve Hmong Christians remained in prison for their religious beliefs during the year.

Central Highlands

Conditions worsened for indigenous highlanders (known as Montagnards) in the Central Highlands. In March, a tripartite agreement between Vietnam, Cambodia, and the U.N. to voluntarily repatriate some one thousand Montagnard refugees who fled to Cambodia crumbled when Vietnam refused to permit U.N. monitors access to the Central Highlands. More than four hundred highlanders were deported from Cambodia to Vietnam in April and May alone, when Cambodia closed its borders and refused to admit asylum seekers. (See Cambodia.)

In June, Vietnamese authorities launched a new crackdown in the Central Highlands, even as the deputy prime minister publicly attributed the troubles in the Central Highlands to mistakes by the nation's leadership. More than six hundred "fast deployment" military teams were dispatched to the region during the year, which largely remained off limits to international observers. Authorities closed

down hundreds of churches lacking official authorization—more than three hundred in Dak Lak province alone. In November the official *Phap Luat* (Law) newspaper reported that dozens of evangelical Christians had been forced to confess to having preached illegally and more than 2,700 Christians had severed connections with “bad elements who abuse religious issues to sow divisions in national unity.”

Between June and November, dozens of arrests were carried out against Protestant church leaders, land rights advocates, and individuals suspected of guiding asylum seekers to Cambodia. In late August, district officials in Mdrak, Dak Lak, arrested at least thirty Ede villagers on the grounds that they were planning a demonstration for Vietnam’s National Day. The charges and place of detention of the majority of those arrested were not made public. Dozens of highlanders disappeared or went into hiding.

A number of highlanders were tried and convicted during the year. On January 25, four highlanders in Chu Se District, Gia Lai, were sentenced to prison terms of up to six and a half years for “organizing illegal migrations.” The state media reported that the men had been deported from Cambodia in April and May 2001. In October, Rlan Loa, an ethnic Jarai from Krong Pac District, Gia Lai, was sentenced to nine years in prison for having “illegally migrated abroad.” Rlan Loa was part of a group of 167 highlanders deported from Cambodia to Vietnam in December 2001. On October 22, three Ede men, Y Tim E Ban, Y Coi B Krong, and Y Tho Mas E Ya, were sentenced to eight years in prison on charges of inciting local people to flee Vietnam. State press reported that on October 24, two Ede men, Y Su Nie, and Y Khai, had “surrendered” to the police in Mdrak District, Dak Lak. On November 15, two Jarai, Ksor Dar and Rahlan Phyu, were sentenced to three and two years respectively for allegedly having guided Montagnard asylum seekers to Cambodia.

Public demonstrations continued to be strongly discouraged throughout Vietnam, although a group of women from the countryside were allowed to conduct a small rally against corruption in front of VCP General Secretary Nong Duc Manh’s home in Hanoi in February. In May, Manh stated that demonstrations timed with the National Assembly elections showed that “our democracy has become excessive.”

There were increasing numbers of reports of conflicts over state confiscation of farmers’ land. In February more than one hundred villagers protested in Ninh Binh province over a land dispute. The leader of the demonstration and eleven others were sentenced to up to thirteen years in prison after a four-day trial in October. In September, Pham Trong Son and Nguyen Thi Thai were sentenced to three years and twenty months, respectively, on charges of disrupting public order after they circulated a petition and organized a protest against inadequate state compensation after their land was confiscated in Ho Chi Minh City. In October, eleven people were injured during a demonstration in Hai Duong City near Hanoi by hundreds of villagers protesting their evictions and inadequate compensation for a new highway and trade center. In Ha Tay province in November, hundreds of villagers clashed with police after authorities forced 190 people to move for the construction of an industrial zone.

In March, the prime minister instructed the Public Security Ministry to upgrade prisons and detention facilities. However, lack of food and medical care in prisons

continued to be widespread. Human Rights Watch received reports of prisoners being subjected to police torture in detention or during interrogation, solitary confinement in dark cells, and shackling. Vietnamese state media reported in January that two police officers were to be tried for torturing a man to death during interrogation. In May, farmers in southern Binh Dinh province blocked traffic and threw rocks at police after a villager died in police custody, allegedly a suicide. In September and October, President Tran Duc Luong approved the early release of more than nine thousand prisoners in an amnesty to mark Vietnam’s National Day. No known religious or political prisoners were included in the releases.

Administrative detention without trial continued to be used against suspected dissidents, including minorities in the Central Highlands, under the 1997 Decree 31/CP. The death penalty continued to be widely used for a wide range of offenses, including corruption and drug trafficking.

Trafficking and HIV/AIDS

Criminal networks that often operated with the tacit support of government and police officials trafficked hundreds of Vietnamese women and girls for prostitution, domestic work, and forced marriage both internally and to other Asian countries, particularly Cambodia and China. Vietnam was also a transit country for women being trafficked from other countries in Asia.

Some sentences were handed down during the year under Vietnam’s law against trafficking in women and children. In May, the People’s Court in Hanoi convicted five Vietnamese people for trafficking women to China and sentenced them to up to fourteen years in prison. In September, the court in Ho Chi Minh City sentenced the operator of a prostitution ring to eight years in prison.

The problem of HIV/AIDS continued to grow, with the Ministry of Health estimating that 154,000 people were infected with HIV. The Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs estimated that one-quarter of Vietnam’s estimated 14,600 sex workers were HIV positive.

Officials adopted an increasingly harsh stance towards high-risk groups for AIDS, such as drug users and prostitutes, who were deemed “social evils.” In late 2001, the government announced plans to send all of Vietnam’s one hundred thousand registered drug addicts to compulsory drug detoxification centers for up to two years. As many as seventy-five thousand drug users remained in detention during the year in seventy-one crowded drug detoxification camps.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

The government continued to prohibit independent human rights groups from operating in Vietnam, restricted the access of U.N. officials seeking to monitor repatriated refugees, and denied permission for international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to conduct official missions to Vietnam.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

At the annual Consultative Group meeting conducted in December 2001, international donors pledged U.S.\$2.4 billion in assistance to Vietnam. Most of Vietnam's donors were circumspect regarding pressure on Vietnam to improve its human rights record. A number of donors supported Vietnam's ambitious ten-year Legal Reform Strategy.

Vietnam, which continued in its membership in the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, maintained an edgy relationship with UNHCR. In February, Vietnamese officials interfered with and then barred UNHCR officials from conducting site visits in the Central Highlands, despite the tripartite agreement for voluntary repatriation of Montagnard refugees.

In August, the U.N. Human Rights Committee issued its concluding observations in regard to Vietnam's report on its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The committee expressed concerns about reports of harassment and detention of religious leaders; restrictions on public meetings, demonstrations, and freedom of expression; the situation of ethnic minorities; capital punishment; prison conditions; the continued application of administrative detention under decree 31/CP; and the lack of an independent judiciary.

The U.N. special rapporteur on disability visited Vietnam in September. He commended the government's policies in regard to disabled people but called for more active implementation of rehabilitation, education, and employment programs.

Asia and Australia

Relations with China thawed a bit with the February visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Vietnam. Jiang praised the improvement in political and economic ties between the two countries. The visit came amidst a criticism from dissidents about controversial border agreements between Vietnam and China.

Relations with Cambodia remained cooperative. During a February visit to Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese deputy prime minister, Cambodia and Vietnam agreed to implement a repatriation agreement calling for return of all Montagnard refugees to Vietnam by April 30. Cambodian border police reportedly cooperated with Vietnamese officials in forcibly deporting hundreds of Montagnard asylum seekers back to Vietnam during the year.

Australia held its first human rights dialogue with Vietnam in June in Hanoi. The Australian government reportedly raised concerns about arbitrary detention, freedom of association, and capital punishment.

European Union

The European Union remained Vietnam's third largest donor. In talks with Prime Minister Phan Van Khai in Brussels in September, the European Commis-

sion president expressed E.U. support for increased bilateral trade and Vietnam's membership in the World Trade Organization, while raising concerns about human rights and religious freedom. In July, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency approved a three-year U.S.\$840,000 study on corruption in national and local government.

In April, the European Parliament issued a resolution about treatment of the highlanders in Vietnam and closure of the refugee camps in Cambodia. Hanoi-based E.U. diplomats conducted several short visits to the Central Highlands, although they were reportedly denied access to highlanders in detention and refugees who had been repatriated from Cambodia.

United States

Bilateral political and economic relations between the United States and Vietnam continued to slowly improve, despite Vietnam's strong reaction to U.S. pressure on human rights and religious freedom. In April, Vietnam reacted defensively to the annual report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), which condemned Vietnam's "grave violations" of religious freedom and designated it as a country of particular concern. A USCIRF delegation, which visited Vietnam in March, expressed concerns about the detention of religious dissidents and the government's suppression of both unregistered as well as officially recognized religious organizations. In August, the U.S. ambassador for religious freedom visited Vietnam.

In September, the U.S. pledged up to \$20 million for a five-year plan to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS in Vietnam among high-risk groups. In announcing the grant, U.S. Ambassador Raymond Burghardt stressed that HIV/AIDS is a virus, and not a "social evil."

In April, Vietnam's state media called the U.S. offer to resettle Montagnard refugees from Cambodia a "scheme to sabotage repatriation, ignite a new rash of illegal border crossings and cause instability in both the Central Highlands and throughout Vietnam." Burghardt visited the Central Highlands in late March, where he discussed land rights issues with local people and explored aid and investment opportunities for the United States.

During the annual U.S.-Vietnam human rights dialogue, conducted in Hanoi in November, the U.S. proposed that Vietnam open up access to the Central Highlands, release political prisoners, and authorize return visits by the U.N. special rapporteurs on religion and ethnic minorities, and by the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Few concrete commitments were secured.