

[Home](#)
[News Releases](#)
[About HRW](#)
[Contribute](#)
[Community](#)
[Publications](#)
[Info by Country](#)

[Africa](#)
[Americas](#)
[Asia](#)
[Europe/Central Asia](#)
[Middle East/N.](#)
[Africa](#)
[United States](#)

Global Issues

[Arms](#)
[Children's Rights](#)
[Economic, Social & Cultural Rights](#)
[HIV/AIDS](#)
[International Justice](#)
[LGBT Rights](#)
[Prisons](#)
[Refugees](#)
[Torture and Abuse](#)
[United Nations](#)
[Women's Rights](#)
[More...](#)

Previous Months

[October 2004](#)
[November-December 2004](#)
[January 2005](#)

Impact

February 2005

- [Nepal: Human Rights Standards Added to U.S. Aid Package](#)
- [Chad: HRW Removes Torturer from U.N](#)
- [Indonesia: U.N. Adopts HRW Call for East Timor Commission](#)
- [Colombia: Spotighting the Paramilitary Demobilization Process](#)
- [United States: HRW Cited by Sen. Durbin in Gonzales Hearing](#)

Nepal: Human Rights Standards Added to U.S. Aid Package

On February 1, King Gyanendra and the Royal Nepalese Army seized power in Nepal. The takeover has led to renewed violence, censorship, and arbitrary arrests by the government. Human Rights Watch recently worked to insert human rights conditions into the U.S. congressional bill on military aid to Nepal. The bill will ensure that



In Kathmandu, Nepalese government security forces apprehend a protestor at a Democracy Day demonstration, February 18, 2005. (c) 2005 Bruno Stevens

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- [Latest News](#)
- [E-mail updates](#)

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- [Who we are, what we do](#)
- [What others say about us](#)
- [Financial statements](#)

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[Campaigns](#)
[Film Festival](#)
[Photo Galleries](#)
[Audio / Video](#)
[Site Map](#)
[Contact Us](#)

the U.S. withholds its military assistance unless Nepal works to end torture, cooperates with the Nepal Human Rights Commission, and complies with Supreme Court *habeas corpus* orders. In the wake of the king's power seizure, Human Rights Watch immediately dispatched a researcher to document human rights abuses. Even before the royal putsch, Nepal had the world's highest number of "disappearances" and a litany of abuses against civilians. [See more on Nepal.](#)

Chad: HRW Removes Torturer from U.N

A known Chadian torturer, Mahamat Djibrine, was recalled from his United Nations post in Côte d'Ivoire after Human Rights Watch lodged a complaint with the United Nations. In the 1980s under the abusive government of Chadian dictator Hissène Habré, Djibrine was an interrogator who tortured detainees and assisted in ethnic cleansing campaigns against the Hadjeraï and Zaghawa people. Over the last decade, Human Rights Watch played a leading role in the collection of witness testimony to build a [case against Hissène Habré](#) and his henchmen. We continue to press for Habré's extradition to Belgium where he will be tried for crimes against humanity and acts of torture. [Read more.](#)

Indonesia: U.N. Adopts HRW Call for East Timor Commission

In conjunction with a coalition of nongovernmental organizations, Human Rights Watch successfully convinced the

"To enlist public opinion leaders and the international community in the cause of human rights for all."

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United Nations to create a commission to investigate the prosecution of Indonesian officials accused of committing crimes against the people of East Timor in 1999. In September 1999, Indonesian Armed Forces and Timorese militias embarked on a campaign of murder, arson, and forced expulsion after East Timorese civilians voted for independence from Indonesia. Since that time, the Indonesian government has created sham criminal trials to acquit or overturn the convictions of every single Indonesian official indicted for crimes related to the violence. We have repeatedly called for an independent U.N. investigative commission to bring justice and accountability to the people of East Timor.

[Read about East Timor.](#)

Colombia: Spotlighting the Paramilitary Demobilization Process

In response to our [reports](#), the United States is paying closer attention to human rights concerns in the process of paramilitary demobilization in Colombia. Human Rights Watch highlighted flaws in the ongoing demobilization process that, among other things, enabled paramilitaries to receive benefits even if they continued to engage in criminal activities and permitted them to hold on to their illegally acquired assets. Our work helped to spark interest in the issue by the U.S. Congress, which led to an unprecedented letter from a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators and Congressmen to Colombian President Álvaro Uribe. The letter called on the Colombian government to

require paramilitaries to fully disclose their knowledge of paramilitary structures, cease any criminal activity, and give up their illegal assets. For more than a decade, Human Rights Watch has exposed atrocities by paramilitaries in Colombia's internal armed conflict, including horrific violence, massacres, extrajudicial executions and kidnappings.

United States: HRW Cited by Sen. Durbin in Gonzales Hearing

Senator Richard Durbin extensively cited Human Rights Watch's position against torture when opposing the appointment of Alberto Gonzales for Attorney General. Gonzales played a key role in constructing the legal justification that eventually led to the torture and abuse of detainees while in U.S. custody. In the Senate, Durbin applauded our 25-year-long commitment to eradicating torture and supported our claim that the Bush Administration's legal positions have undermined this work. Nevertheless, Gonzales was sworn in as the nation's 80th Attorney General on February 3, 2005. [Read about our work on torture.](#)

IN THE NEWS:

[HRW Awarded German Theodor-Heuss Prize](#)

Germany's prestigious [Theodor-Heuss Foundation](#) announced it will award its highest honor to Human Rights Watch in April 2005. The foundation recognized Human Rights Watch for the "even-

handedness and credibility" of our global reporting. Human Rights Watch will open our first office in Germany this year in Berlin.

Iraq Researcher Profiled

[The Atlantic Monthly](#) profiled Human Rights Watch Iraq researcher Hania Mufti in the magazine's March 2005 cover story. The article chronicles her work over the past 20 years reporting on human rights abuses carried out by Saddam Hussein and his Baathist regime.

End China's Mining Tragedies

China Researchers Sara Davis and Mickey Spiegel write in [The Asian Wall Street Journal](#) about China's inadequate protection of workers in the country's dangerous mining industry.

Protect Iran's Civil Society

In The [New York Times](#), Iran Researcher Hadi Ghaemi and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize recipient [Shirin Ebadi](#) argue that the U.S. will foster democracy in Iran through the promotion of its vibrant civil society and not by military threat.

No Mention of Torture?

Executive Director Kenneth Roth reviews Alan Dershowitz's book, *Rights From Wrongs: A Secular Theory of the Origins of Rights* in [The Washington Post](#). While Dershowitz purports to address the historical sources of basic rights, he has glaringly omitted the fundamental right to be free from torture.



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