

human rights, democracy, and labor, made his first trip to Algeria. During two days he met with human rights activists and government officials. His public remarks about local rights conditions were general and brief. In the year since Koh's visit, the U.S. government made no high-level public statements on human rights except for the solid chapter on Algeria in the State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*.

## EGYPT

### HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

The human rights situation continued to deteriorate, marked by violations of freedom of expression, association, and assembly; widespread arrests of government opponents and prolonged detentions under state of emergency laws, in force almost continuously since 1967; and grossly unfair trials before military and state security courts.

Elections for the 454-member People's Assembly, conducted in three stages between October 18 and November 14, 2000, were the first to be held under full judicial supervision, following legislative reforms prompted by a July 2000 ruling of Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court. The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) won by a large majority but supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, who could only run as independent candidates, secured seventeen seats and eleven other opposition parties shared sixteen. Despite judicial supervision, clashes between rival supporters and with the police left between nine and fifteen people dead, and scores wounded. The authorities arrested hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood-aligned and other opposition candidates and supporters in the run up to the elections and prevented others from reaching polling stations.

The authorities carried out further arrests of pro-Muslim Brotherhood candidates and supporters in advance of the May-June elections to the *Majlis al-Shura* (Consultative Council, the upper house of the parliament). These elections passed off relatively peacefully, and were also won by the NDP.

The government-controlled Political Parties Committee of the *Majlis al-Shura* licensed Egypt 2000, a new political party, in April, having previously rejected it in 1999 only for that decision to be overturned on April 7 by the Political Parties Tribunal. Egypt 2000 was only the second political party to be licensed since the formation of the Political Parties Committee in 1977, several other political groups having been rejected, usually on grounds that their programs did not differ significantly from those of existing registered political parties.

The Islamist opposition Labor Party, whose activities were frozen by the Political Parties Committee in May 2000, remained suspended and its publications banned. At least eleven Administrative Court rulings ordered the lifting of a ban on the party's bi-weekly newspaper, *al-Sha'ab*, as a breach of constitutionally guaranteed press freedoms. On March 20, the Administrative Court declared unlawful

the government's non-compliance with its rulings and its delaying tactic of lodging appeals before courts that were clearly not competent to hear such cases. Despite this, on March 21, the Political Parties Committee confirmed the ban on *al-Sha'ab* as the Labor Party's status remained unresolved. In mid-July, a board of advisers to the Supreme Administrative Court, which has previously upheld rulings in favor of *al-Sha'ab*, supported the committee's position. The board argued that earlier Administrative Court rulings were incorrect in stating that while the committee was empowered to suspend political parties, it did not have the authority to ban publications. In the interim, *al-Sha'ab* continued to appear in an on-line version.

Magdi Hussain, *al-Sha'ab's* imprisoned editor-in-chief, was released under a presidential pardon on December 27, 2000, as were *al-Sha'ab* journalist Salah Bdeiwi and cartoonist 'Issam Hanafi. All three were sentenced in August 1999 for defaming Minister of Agriculture Yusuf Wali. In March, Hussain was elected secretary-general of the Labor Party, but in August, party leader Ibrahim Shukri suspended him and ten others from the party's executive committee and replaced him as *al-Sha'ab's* editor-in-chief in an effort to purge the party of Islamists and so obtain government approval to operate again.

The government continued to try civilian political suspects before military courts and in mid-October announced that 253 Islamist detainees would be tried before the Supreme Military Court. Of these, eighty-three had been arrested in May and detained for membership of an illegal organization, illegally possessing weapons, planning to overthrow the government by force, and forging official documents. They included several foreign nationals; local press speculation linking them to Osama Bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* (The Base) network was later rejected by President Husni Mubarak. The other 170 were suspected members of the banned *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Group), many of whom, according to defense lawyers, had already been held without trial for several years. All 170 reportedly faced charges of carrying out acts of political violence between 1994 and 1998. Local human rights groups condemned the decision to try more civilians in military courts, from which there is no right of appeal. Since 1992, such courts have convicted hundreds of Islamists, often after grossly unfair trials and torture during pre-trial interrogation, and handed down scores of death sentences, many of which have been carried out. On September 20, government security agents abducted publisher Farid Zahran, a leader of the Egyptian People's Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian Uprising (EPCSPU), to forestall a demonstration on September 28 called to mark the first anniversary of the outbreak of renewed conflict between Palestinians and Israeli forces. Detained for two weeks, Zahran was accused of disseminating tendentious information aimed at disturbing public order and planning demonstrations, then released on bail on October 4.

Thousands of alleged members or supporters of banned Islamist groups continued to be detained without trial, but a few were released, including Hamdi Abd al-Rahman and Isma'il al-Bakl, both *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* leaders. They were released in July after serving fifteen-year prison terms for their part in the 1981 assassination of former president Anwar al-Sadat plus an additional five years when they were held illegally.

Police routinely tortured or ill-treated detainees, and there were three deaths

between January and July. In two earlier deaths in custody, criminal proceedings against those accused of inflicting torture resulted in convictions. On February 7, the Shibin al-Kom criminal court sentenced the director of Wadi Natroun maximum security prison to ten years of imprisonment in connection with the death under torture of Ahmad Muhammad 'Issa, an awaiting trial prisoner, and sentenced a major to seven years and four sergeants to five year terms, dismissing all from their posts. In another case, a lieutenant at al-'Agouza police station in Cairo received a two-year prison term with labor on July 25 for beating detainee Ahmad Imam 'Abd al-Na'im to death.

Egyptian courts sentenced at least sixty-nine people to death between November 2000 and November 2001 for murder, rape, and other crimes, and carried out eight executions.

The government continued to clamp down on Islamist political activists, breaching their rights to freedom of expression and association. On November 19, 2000, a military court sentenced fifteen lawyers and other professionals linked to the banned Muslim Brotherhood to prison terms of up to five years on charges including membership of an illegal organization, but acquitted five other defendants. Earlier, in October, the authorities detained hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Cairo, Alexandria, and elsewhere in advance of the parliamentary elections, including some who were standing as independent candidates. Those held included several members of the campaigning team of Jihan al-Halafawi, the only woman candidate linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, and Labor Party members running Magdi Hussain's electoral campaign while he served his prison sentence.

This pattern was repeated in advance of the Majlis al-Shura elections. The authorities detained at least 140 Muslim Brotherhood sympathisers starting in mid-April 2001 in Asyut, Alexandria, al-Fayyum, and other centers, including some who had just registered as candidates, such as Muhammad al-Sayyid Habib, an Asyut University professor and former parliamentarian, and Abu Bakr Mitkis. All were released without charge after the elections. Twenty-five other leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested on July 15 in Imbaba for allegedly holding an illegal meeting. They included Muhammad al-Shater, a former political prisoner and reputedly a member of the Muslim Brotherhood's highest decision-making body, the *Maktab al-Irshad* (Guidance Bureau).

The government also prosecuted people on the basis of their alleged sexual orientation. In July, the authorities referred fifty-two men to the Emergency State Security Court for Misdemeanours, from which there is no right of appeal, on charges of "obscene behaviour" under the Combat of Prostitution Law (Law 10 of 1961). Two defendants were also charged with expressing "contempt for religion" under article 98(f) of the penal code, while a sixteen year old minor was sent before the Juveniles Court. Most of the defendants had been arrested on May 11 in Cairo and initially held incommunicado. During their trial, which began on July 18, the court refused to investigate allegations by some defendants that they had been tortured to make them confess and on November 14, twenty-one of them received sentences of between one and two years of imprisonment on the "obscenity" charge. The two charged with "contempt for religion" received three- and five-year terms.

The others were acquitted. The sixteen-year-old, who did have a right of appeal from the Juveniles Court, was sentenced to three years of imprisonment for "obscenity" on September 18. His appeal was due to be heard in November.

On December 6, 2001, the authorities released eighty-nine prisoners on humanitarian grounds pending a verdict by the Sohag Criminal Court. They had been among ninety-six Muslims and Coptic Christians tried in connection with communal violence at al-Kusheh village in December 1999, in which twenty Copts and one Muslim died. The Sohag Criminal Court had acquitted all the defendants except for four Muslims, who were sentenced to terms ranging between one and ten years for illegal possession of weapons, manslaughter, and damaging property, but Coptic religious leaders and families of those killed criticized the verdict and the General Prosecution quickly lodged an appeal. In July, the Court of Cassation quashed the verdict and ordered a retrial of all the defendants, which then opened in November.

In June, thousands of Copts demonstrated in Cairo over four days in protest at the publication of sexually explicit photographs of a former Coptic monk by the weekly newspaper *al-Naba'* and its sister publication *Akher Khabar*, both of whose publishing licenses the authorities withdrew on July 4. Several demonstrators were injured in clashes with the police. The authorities charged Mamdouh Mahran, editor-in-chief of *al-Naba'*, with undermining public order, defaming the Coptic Church, publishing pornography, and other offences, and his trial opened on June 24 before the State Security Court for Misdemeanours. On September 16, he was convicted on all but one count and sentenced to three years of imprisonment. President Mubarak ratified the sentence on September 30, but Mahran suffered a heart attack and was then hospitalized under guard. He appealed successfully to the Administrative Court to overturn the Egypt Press Association's decision to revoke his membership, though a counter-appeal by the association to the Supreme Administrative Court was still pending by November.

In January, Sherif al-Filali, an engineer, went on trial before the Emergency Supreme State Security Court (ESSSC) charged effectively with espionage. Prosecutors alleged that he was recruited into Israel's Mossad intelligence agency by a Russian army officer, Gregory Sergevic, who was tried in his absence in the same case. During two months of pre-trial detention by the State Security Intelligence (SSI) in Cairo, al-Filali was reportedly subjected to "psychological pressure" to confess. However, while Sergevic was sentenced to life imprisonment al-Filali was acquitted. The presiding judge ruled that Egyptian law provides for acquittal if a defendant confesses before the start of a criminal investigation, as in al-Filali's case, even if the available evidence is sufficient to secure a conviction. On June 27, the state security prosecutor announced that he would seek a re-trial, permissible under emergency legislation. Verdicts of the ESSSC, which cannot be appealed, must be ratified by the president. But in September, the president's office refused to endorse the verdict. The authorities then rearrested al-Filali and his new trial opened on October 28. If convicted, he faced up to twenty-five years of imprisonment with hard labor.

The government continued to target writers for exercising their freedom of expression. In December 2000, the General Prosecution successfully appealed for

the re-trial of Salahuddin Muhsin after the State Security Court for Misdemeanours in Giza gave him a six-month suspended sentence in July 2000 for denigrating Islam in his writings. In January 2001, he was retried before a different circuit of the State Security Court, convicted and sentenced to three years' imprisonment with hard labor. He had no right of appeal.

The government also continued to ban books it deemed "offensive" to society, either because their contents were held to be sexually explicit or because they were considered defamatory to Islam. In May, al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy banned two works, respectively by 'Alaa' Hamed and Ibrahim Abu Khalil on the latter ground.

Workers' rights came under attack through arbitrary measures taken against trade union activists who were outspoken around issues such as worker safety in the state sector. Such measures, designed to prevent them from participating in union elections, included transfer to other companies at short notice in the run-up to elections, and being pressurized into withdrawing their candidacy. In the run-up to the General Federation of Trade Unions elections, which began on October 8, scores of workers who had been disqualified from running as candidates to shop floor committees lodged appeals before the administrative courts contesting irregularities in nomination procedures. The Center for Trade Union and Workers' Services (CTUWS), an Egyptian NGO that monitors and campaigns for workers' rights, also came under pressure. Its director, Kamal Abbas, and Abdul Rashid Hilal, board member and vice-chairman of the Iron and Steel Company trade union, were both summoned before prosecution officials in Helwan in mid-September as part of the government's attempt to stifle criticism of working conditions and of irregularities in trade union election procedures.

In February, the Egyptian Bar Association elected a new board and chairman, ending five years of judicial sequestration imposed by the government in 1996 for alleged financial irregularities by board members. There was wide speculation that the government hoped the election, held under judicial supervision, would diminish the Muslim Brotherhood's influence over the association but the outcome once again produced a Muslim Brotherhood-dominated board, with Nasserist lawyer Sameh 'Ashour elected as chairman.

In a landmark ruling on June 2, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court declared as unconstitutional article 48 of the penal code, which punished criminal complicity to commit felonies or misdemeanours by two or more persons even if no crime had actually been committed. The article, which provided for up to fifteen years of imprisonment for felonies and up to three years of imprisonment for misdemeanours, was widely used against Islamists charged with security offences, and most recently invoked in the case the Saadeddin Ibrahim. (See below.) In late July, Prosecutor General Maher Abdel Wahed decided not to exercise his right to refer the ruling back to the court for re-examination, and ordered the release of all prisoners convicted on the basis of article 48. In September, lawyers acting for scores of Islamist prisoners lodged appeals with the State Security Court requesting their release on these grounds, but by November it was unclear if any had been released.

## DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

An amended version of the controversial Law on Civil Associations and Institutions (Law 153 of 1999), which the Supreme Constitutional Court had overturned in June 2000, was presented to the Majlis al-Shura in April but it had not been presented to the People's Assembly by November, and the earlier Law on Private Associations and Institutions (Law 32 of 1964) remained in force. One positive amendment would allow administrative courts to hear cases arising from disputes between NGOs and the authorities, in lieu of courts of first instance, in line with the Supreme Constitutional Court ruling, but other provisions that would allow the government to control and interfere in the internal activities of NGOs, remained unchanged.

On July 1, Cairo's Administrative Court overturned the government's decision to refuse, for unspecified security reasons, to register the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) as a recognized NGO. Following the overturning of Law 153 of 1999, the EOHR had applied for registration under Law 32 of 1964 but was informed by the Ministry of Social Affairs in July 2000 that a decision on its application had been deferred upon a request from security officials. The EOHR took the matter to the Administrative Court in February, and the July ruling stated that since the ministry failed to process the EOHR's application within the sixty-day period specified by law, it was deemed accepted. The ruling was legally binding on the ministry and its implementation could not be deferred even if appealed before the Supreme Administrative Court, but by November the ministry had not complied.

The government maintained its crackdown on human rights activists with the trial and conviction of Saadeddin Ibrahim, director of the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, and twenty-seven co-defendants. On May 21, the Supreme State Security Court sentenced Ibrahim to seven years of imprisonment on charges of receiving funding without authorization, disseminating false information damaging to Egypt's interests, and securing funds through fraud. He and four co-defendants were acquitted on a fourth charge of conspiring to bribe public officials. The court imposed one-year suspended sentences on twenty-one defendants, and sentenced six others, including two who faced separate bribery charges, to between two and five years of imprisonment with labor.

Ten of the accused remained at large, however, having been tried in their absence. Most of the defendants were associated with two local NGOs, the Ibn Khaldun Center and the Hoda Association, five as employees and the rest as short-term contract workers. Many had been arrested in mid-2000 in connection with two projects funded by the European Union (E.U.) aimed at promoting voter education and encouraging eligible voters to register and exercise their political rights.

The seven-month trial opened on November 18, 2000. In addition to serious pre-trial irregularities, the proceedings failed to meet international standards for fair trial. Verdicts of the Supreme State Security Court, an exceptional court based on emergency legislation, could only be appealed by cassation or review, limiting the grounds for appeal to points of law and precluding the facts of the case. Defense

lawyers did not have full access to prosecution documents presented to the court until four months into the trial. After sentencing, Saadeddin Ibrahim, Khaled al-Fayyad, Usama Hammad, and Mohammad Hassanein were held in Tora Mazra'at prison, and Nadia Abdel Nour and Magda al-Bey at the women's prison in Qanater. The defendants who received suspended sentences were released within days. An appeal hearing before the Court of Cassation was scheduled for December 19. The outcome of the trial was condemned by Egyptian and international human rights organizations, and both U.S. and E.U. officials voiced concern.

In June, the government shut down the offices of the Sudanese Human Rights Organization (SHRO), which had been operating in exile in Egypt since 1991. Although no official reason was given, the SHRO's president believed that the closure was the direct outcome of a report issued by the organization on the practice of slavery in Sudan.

## **THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

### **United Nations**

In January, the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child considered Egypt's second periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It welcomed improvements to infant and child mortality rates, but noted that "narrow interpretations of Islamic texts by authorities, particularly in areas relating to family law, are impeding the enjoyment of some human rights under the Convention." The committee criticized continued violations of children's rights to healthcare and education, conditions for juvenile detainees, inadequate safeguards against physical or sexual abuse of children, and economic exploitation. Among other things, the committee recommended implementation of the 1996 Children's Code and the systematic involvement of "civil society, especially children's associations and advocacy groups, throughout all stages of the implementation of the Convention, including policy-making."

In January also, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered Egypt's third, fourth, and fifth reports on its application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The committee welcomed the reduction in female illiteracy rates and legislative reforms aimed at eliminating discrimination against women, particularly relating to divorce rights. However, it criticized other discriminatory laws, including the Nationality Law which bars Egyptian women married to non-Egyptians from passing on their nationality to their children, and certain provisions of the penal code. The committee recommended legislative reforms in these areas, and greater efforts by the authorities to prevent violence against women, including domestic violence, marital rape, abuses against detained women, and female genital mutilation.

In August, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination considered Egypt's most recent reports on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The committee noted

the “significant role” of the Supreme Constitutional Court in “upholding human rights and constitutional guarantees . . . as well as the prevention and elimination of discrimination” but criticized the absence of legal provisions establishing that an ethnic or racial motivation for defamation or acts of violence be considered an aggravating factor. The committee also expressed concern about the discriminatory provisions of the Nationality Law, noting the government’s promise to revise it, and recommended speedy resolution of the “difficulties relating to the registration of some non-governmental organizations dealing with the promotion and protection of human rights,” particularly those working to combat racial discrimination.

The U.N. special rapporteur on torture, in his report to the Commission on Human Rights published on January 25, concluded that “torture is systematically practised by the security forces in Egypt, in particular by State Security Intelligence,” and that despite government denials, the practice is “habitual, widespread and deliberate in at least a considerable part of the country.” The special rapporteur cited thirty-five cases of torture and thirty-two cases of death in custody reportedly caused by torture or medical negligence that were transmitted to the government between 1997 and 1999, to which the government replied in March and October 2000. He expressed particular concern at “the persistence of the explanation of death in many of the cases as being ‘a sharp drop in blood pressure,’” and stated that the government’s responses reinforced rather than alleviated his concerns. The special rapporteur also criticized the government’s continuing failure to permit him access to the country.

On May 25, the U.N. special representative on human rights defenders and the special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers issued a joint statement of concern about the conviction of Saadeddin Ibrahim and his co-defendants following unfair trial procedures. They commented that “the conviction of these members of civil society for their human rights activities will have a chilling effect on the activities of other human rights defenders in Egypt,” and called for the release of the defendants pending their appeal hearing.

### **European Union**

On December 13, 2000, the European Commission (E.C.) issued a statement concerning the charges levelled against Saadeddin Ibrahim and some of his co-defendants that they had misused E.C. funding of two projects administered by the Ibn Khaldun Center and the Hoda Association. The projects, for which the E.C. had provided a total of 315,000 euro, involved the promotion of voter education and the exercise of political rights. The E.C. stated that “both the Ibn Khaldun and HODA projects were the subject of external mid-term audits whose reports gave no cause for concern, financial or otherwise.” On May 23, a spokesman for External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten expressed concern about the sentences passed on the defendants in the case, and said that while E.U. aid to Egypt had not been suspended, it was “encountering certain difficulties in its implementation.” On June 14, the European Parliament passed a resolution expressing concern about the verdict and calling for Ibrahim “to be assured a fair trial,” expressing its support for the



Ibn Khaldun Center and calling on the E.C. “to continue to support its initiatives.” With reference to the case of Ibrahim and that of Nawal al-Sa’dawi, the resolution called on the E.C. “to strengthen its MEDA programme for democracy, in cooperation with the Egyptian authorities, in particular with a view to supporting freedom of expression and the independence of the media.”

The Association Agreement between Egypt and the E.U., which had been under negotiation for over five years, was initiated by the two sides on January 26 and signed on June 25. The agreement, which enters into force after ratification by the parliaments of Egypt and of E.U. member states, covers economic, political, security, and social relations between the two sides. Following the signing of the agreement, Commissioner Patten stated that the “partnership is firmly based on shared political and economic interests as well as a joint commitment for the promotion of democracy and the respect of human rights.” He added that the human rights provisions in the agreement would provide a framework within which human rights issues would be raised with the Egyptian authorities.

### **United States**

The U.S. maintained the previous year’s levels of foreign aid to Egypt, with the Bush administration requesting for fiscal year 2002 an estimated U.S. \$1.3 billion for military assistance and U.S. \$655 million for economic support funds. The administration said military assistance would “support a modern, well-trained Egyptian military that will help ensure stability in the region” and “enable Egypt to participate as a coalition partner in operations that further U.S. interests.” Of the funds requested for economic assistance, an estimated 14 percent was earmarked for “programs meant to reduce the fertility rate, improve health care, support democratic institutions and increase access to schooling for girls.”

Following the conviction and sentencing of Saadeddin Ibrahim and his co-defendants, a State Department spokesman said in a press briefing on May 21 that “we are deeply troubled about the outcome, and . . . we have been expressing all along our concerns about the process that resulted in this sentence.” U.S. embassy staff in Cairo had observed the trial and visited Ibrahim, who held dual Egyptian-U.S. citizenship, in Mazra’at Tora prison where he was taken after sentencing.

In its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000*, the State Department said that while the Egyptian government “generally respected the human rights of its citizens in some areas, . . . its record was poor with respect to freedom of expression and its treatment of detainees.” It pointed to the government’s use of emergency laws to restrict “many basic rights,” including freedom of expression, assembly, and association.

A delegation from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom visited Egypt from March 20-24 as part of a wider fact-finding tour of the Middle East. It met with government officials, religious leaders, academics, journalists, and NGO representatives, but several Egyptian human rights groups declined to cooperate or assist the delegates. On March 28, the commission urged President George W. Bush to raise the issue of religious freedoms with President Mubarak during the latter’s U.S. visit in April. The commission’s detailed findings, released on May 14

as an addendum to its annual report, concluded that “serious problems of discrimination against a number of religious groups remain widespread in Egypt,” including Coptic Christians, Baha’is, and Muslims deemed by the authorities to be “fundamentalists.

President Mubarak visited Washington, D.C. in the first week of April and held talks with President Bush, political leaders, and representatives of the business community. The visit focused on continuing efforts to salvage Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations and on economic ties between Egypt and the U.S., with Egypt calling for a free trade agreement with the U.S. There was no indication that human rights issues were discussed.

The Bush administration announced in November that an arms deal with Egypt worth an estimated U.S. \$400 million had been reached, and that economic aid to Egypt would be accelerated to offset the adverse effects which the September 11 attacks on the U.S. were having on the Egyptian economy, notably the tourist industry. On November 29, a legal assistance treaty between the U.S. and Egypt came into effect, aimed at increasing cooperation in combatting transnational crimes, including drug trafficking, money laundering, and “terrorist group financing,” according to the State Department.

### **Relevant Human Rights Watch Reports:**

*Egypt: Underage and Unprotected: Child Labor in Egypt’s Cotton Fields, 1/01*

## **IRAN**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS**

Factional conflict within Iran’s clerical leadership continued to result in severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and political participation. Deteriorating economic conditions made worse by severe natural disasters contributed to increasing unrest and a pervasive sense of social insecurity, reflected in clashes between demonstrators and the security forces and in harsh measures against drug-traffickers and other criminals. President Mohammad Khatami won another landslide victory for those associated with the cause of political reform when he was reelected by 77 percent of voters for a second four-year term in June, but the power struggle between conservatives and reformists remained unresolved. Conservative clerics maintained a strong grip on power through the judiciary, the Council of Guardians and the office of the Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Promises by reformists to increase respect for basic freedoms and the rule of law remained unrealized, and severe restrictions imposed on the independent print media, the major visible gain of President Khatami’s first period in office, remained in place. The judiciary, and branches of the security forces beyond