

voiced its support for long-term enforcement of sanctions. The U.S. government continued to support policies seen as unfavorable toward Iran in disputes over control over exports of energy resources from the Caspian Basin region.

If the U.S. and Iran were clearly divided on their policies to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they had more in common with respect to their shared concern over the Taliban government in Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, and the identification of the Afghanistan-based Osama Bin Laden as a prime suspect in these attacks, the possibility of closer cooperation between the U.S. and Iranian governments emerged as a prospect for the first time in more than twenty years.

Relevant Human Rights Watch Reports:

Iran: Stifling Dissent: The Human Rights Consequences of Inter-Factional Struggle in Iran, 6/01

IRAQ AND IRAQI KURDISTAN

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

The Iraqi government of President Saddam Hussain perpetrated widespread and gross human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests of suspected political opponents and their relatives, routine torture and ill-treatment of detainees, summary execution of military personnel and political detainees as part of a "prison cleansing" campaign, and forced expulsions of Kurds and Turkmen from Kirkuk and other regions.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), who controlled most of the northerly Duhok, Arbil, and Sulaimaniya provinces, sought to implement a 1998 U.S.-brokered peace settlement but did not agree to set up a unified administration for the region. There were repeated threats of military action and incursions into Kurdish-controlled areas by Iraqi government troops, and by Turkish government troops pursuing members of the opposition Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Human rights abuses were committed by Kurdish opposition groups, including in the context of clashes between PUK forces and those of Islamist groups.

Economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations Security Council in 1991 remained in force despite the continued erosion of the international consensus on the issue. The government continued to deny U.N. weapons inspectors access to Iraq. Efforts by the United States (U.S.) and the United Kingdom (U.K.) to restructure the sanctions by removing restrictions on civilian imports yet tightening controls on military goods and oil revenue failed due to other Security Council members' opposition. The Iraqi government also opposed the proposal and temporarily suspended its oil exports in protest.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED IRAQ

The Iraqi authorities reportedly carried out numerous executions of military personnel suspected of involvement in alleged coup attempts. These included, in March, three air force officers, including Fawzi Hamed al-'Ubaidi and Faris Ahmad al-'Alwan, and an army major-general, Tareq al-Sa'dun. In July, the authorities executed two more air force officers in Kirkuk, including Kadhim Khairallah al-Dulaimi, and at least five Republican Guard officers, including Staff Colonel Sami Abd al-Ghaffur al-Alusi. Other executions of military personnel were carried out in August and October at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad; the victims included former army colonels 'Abd al-Salam Hadi al-Tikriti and Saleh Manna' Salman al-Tikriti, detained since 1995 and executed on October 8. Other senior military personnel were reportedly arrested in Baghdad in late October.

The authorities also executed numerous inmates at Abu Ghraib, al-Makasib, and other prisons, including long term untried political detainees and convicted prisoners. Some were apparently tortured first. Relatives reported that the body of 'Abd al-Wahed al-Rifa'i, hanged in March after two years in detention without trial, bore marks of torture when they collected it on March 26 from the General Security Directorate in Baghdad. Thirteen Abu Ghraib detainees, including students, were executed in August, and twenty-one prisoners convicted by special courts of killing several security agents were executed in October, including Falah Ahmad Hussain, Muhsin Yassin Kadhim, and Baqer Jassim 'Ali.

In November 2000, a former Iraqi intelligence officer who fled to Jordan in June 1999 disclosed the existence of a government "prison cleansing" campaign. Captain Khalid Sajed al-Janabi, an intelligence operative from 1979 to 1999, said a March 15, 1998 directive from the Office of the President had authorized the establishment of supervisory committees to "clean up Iraqi prisons" and that he had been appointed to the Abu Ghraib prison committee. The "cleansing" operations, he said, resulted in the execution of some 2,000 detainees and sentenced prisoners on one day, April 27, 1998. Al-Janabi also reported that at least fifty Kuwaitis detained by Iraq since the 1991 Gulf war were still being held at the General Investigative Bureau in Baghdad between April and July 1998. A doctor who worked at Abu Ghraib prison hospital before fleeing to Jordan in July also reported regular mass executions of prisoners. Maher Fakher Khashan said most of those executed were political detainees identified by serial number rather than by name, whose bodies were removed for burial in special vehicles, and that he had most recently witnessed thirty-four such executions on July 8. He reported too that prison authorities forced doctors to inject some detainees with poison and then issue death certificates attributing their deaths to natural causes.

A preliminary survey carried out in northern Iraq by the U.N. Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) estimated the number of internally displaced persons at 805,000 by the end of October 2000, comprising 23 percent of the population. On December 4, the executive director of the U.N. Office of the Iraq Program (OIP) told the Security Council he was "greatly concerned with the increasing number of internally displaced persons," whose living conditions in some cases

were “abominable.” A major factor in the rising number of internally displaced persons was the government’s continued expulsion of Kurds and Turkmen from their homes in Kirkuk, Tuz Khormatu, Khaniqin, and other districts as part of its “Arabization” program. Most were expelled to areas controlled by Kurdish opposition forces and a smaller number to central and southern Iraq. According to PUK officials, those expelled between January 1991 and December 2000 and resettled in areas under its control totaled 93,888, while some 25,000 others expelled during the same period were resettled in KDP-controlled areas. Scores more were reportedly expelled between January and March, particularly from the Tuz Khormatu area. In August and September, Kurdish opposition sources said the government was intensifying the rate of resettlement of Arab families in areas from which Kurds and Turkmen had been expelled, including the Lailan, Shwan, and Qara Hanjir districts of Kirkuk. The government also gave Arabs title deeds of property owned by those expelled, built new housing in villages around Altun Kopri and Tuz Khormatu to accommodate more Arab families, and substituted Arabic for Kurdish, Turkman, and Assyrian place names. On September 6, according to the government press, Iraq’s Revolution Command Council issued decree 199, enabling Iraqis aged eighteen or over to change their official ethnic identity by applying to register as Arabs.

Criminal proceedings against Fowad Hussain Haidar, arrested in late June 2000 following the killing of two staff members of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Baghdad, and the wounding of eight others, remained inconclusive. (See *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001*.) On December 5, 2000, the Security Council called on Iraq to complete its investigation into the incident, but on March 2, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he had not been provided with the government’s report into the investigation. On May 18, he informed the Security Council that on May 14, “the criminal court postponed, yet again, for the seventh time, its proceedings in the trial of the accused, to 28 May.” By October, no further information was available on the case.

In his March 2 report to the Security Council on the implementation of the “oil-for-food” program, the U.N. secretary-general said that increased revenues placed the Iraqi government “in a position to reduce current malnutrition levels and improve the health status of the Iraqi people.” In his May 18 report, the secretary-general expressed regret that no progress had been made on arrangements for local procurement of goods and services and the provision of a cash component, provided for under resolution 1284 (1999). He noted that an “increasing range of equipment is being imported under the program, with insufficient local resources available to undertake installation, training and maintenance.” In his September 28 report, the secretary-general reiterated his concern about the increase in the “number of holds placed on applications, the total value of which was \$4.05 billion as at 14 September 2001,” impeding the implementation of the “oil-for-food” program. He urged the Security Council and the Sanctions Committee to further streamline approval procedures, and “allow greater latitude so that a wider variety of medicine, health supplies, foodstuffs, as well as materials and supplies for essential civilian needs can be procured and supplied most expeditiously.” He also said that the program had been adversely affected by the “substantial reduction in revenues received from oil exports” decreased or totally suspended by Iraq, and well as by the “inordinate delays” and refusals in the issuance of visas by Iraq to U.N. personnel.

Concern about the overall humanitarian situation in Iraq was voiced by U.N. and other humanitarian agencies. In a December 2000 report, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that “despite the increased availability of food, medicines and medical equipment, following a rise in oil prices and the extension of the ‘oil-for-food’ programme, suffering remained widespread.” Information released by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on July 11 warned that “one in five children in the south and centre of Iraq remain so malnourished that they need special therapeutic feeding,” and that child sickness rates remain “alarmingly high.” The organization called for speedy implementation of the provisions of resolution 1330, which had earmarked five per cent of oil revenues for “the most vulnerable groups in Iraq.”

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Most of the three northerly Duhok, Arbil, and Sulaimaniya provinces remained under the control of the KDP and the PUK, which maintained separate administrative, legislative, and executive structures in areas under their control. Efforts to implement the 1998 Washington Accord began after meetings between KPD leader Mas’ud Barzani and PUK leader Jalal Talabani in January, leading to negotiations over the gradual normalization of relations between the two sides. By November, they had not agreed on a unified administration for the region; earlier, the KDP held municipal elections in areas under its control on May 26. However, the two sides eased restrictions on the free movement of people and trade between their respective areas and decreased their military presence along the ceasefire line. They also facilitated the gradual exchange of people internally displaced since the 1996 clashes, with some 1,300 families returning to their homes in Arbil, Duhok, and Sulaimaniya between June and October. The two sides also increased cooperation on security matters and prisoner exchanges. Both sides continued to grant access to their prisons to the ICRC, which reported that during 2000 it visited 792 detainees held “for security reasons or in connection with the inter-Kurdish fighting” in thirty-two places of detention.

President Hussain proposed the reopening of negotiations between the government and Kurdish political parties on July 15, but in a joint statement on July 27, the KDP and PUK set preconditions: they demanded an end to mass deportations of Kurds and Turkman, clarification of the fate of detainees in Iraqi government custody and missing persons, and acceptance by the Iraqi government of federalism as the basis of future relations between the Kurdish region and Baghdad. The government rejected these demands in August.

Iraqi troops were deployed to the northern region on several occasions, apparently with the aim of launching armed attacks on Kurdish-controlled territory. In mid-June, the government deployed tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery and infantry units south of Arbil, coinciding with efforts by the U.K. and the U.S. to restructure the economic embargo imposed on Iraq and to impose “smart sanctions.” Government troops clashed with PUK forces in the Kifri region on September 9, and in early October they reportedly entered and occupied the village of Sadawa, south-west of Arbil. The KDP said that repeated artillery bombardment of

some thirty front-line villages by government troops had resulted in the displacement of their inhabitants.

There were at least eight bomb attacks in Arbil in other cities between November 2000 and October 2001. Some targeted buildings used by U.N. personnel and by local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In August, the KDP said it had arrested two men in separate incidents whose vehicles were apparently carrying explosives, and that they had confessed to working for Iraqi intelligence. Among them was a Tunisian national employed by the U.N. who was caught on July 19 while returning from Baghdad with explosives in his vehicle. He was released on July 31 and handed over to Tun Myat, U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, during his visit to Iraqi Kurdistan.

Other bomb blasts in KDP-held territory, including one in Arbil on April 23 and another in Zakho on October 15, were reportedly attributed to Islamist groups based in the region, notably *Harakat al-Tawhid al-Islami* (Islamic Unity Movement, IUM). The IUM, one of three Islamist groups which broke away at different times from the mainstream Islamic Unity Movement in Kurdistan (IUMK) and in September merged to form *Jund al-Islam* (Soldiers of God), was also held responsible by the KDP for the assassination on February 18 of Francois Hariri, governor of Arbil and member of the KDP's Central Committee. He was shot dead by unidentified assailants as he drove to work in the city. His bodyguard was also killed and his driver wounded. The KDP announced in late March that it had identified several IUM members as being responsible for the assassination, one of whom was apprehended.

Clashes between PUK forces and Jund al-Islam began in September, shortly after the group's leader, Abu 'Ubaidullah al-Shafi'i, declared *Jihad* (Holy War) against secular and other political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan deemed to have deviated from the "true path of Islam." After the September 11 attacks in the U.S., the PUK accused the group of links with Osama bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* (The Base) network and said its members included Arabs of various nationalities who had received military training in Afghanistan. The PUK also accused the group of imposing an extreme form of Islam in their strongholds of Biyara and Tawela, including barring women from employment and education, and of preventing the Naqshabandi Sufis based in the area from practicing their religious rites.

On September 22, Jund al-Islam abducted a doctor, Rebwar Sayyid 'Umar, from his surgery in Halabja and detained him for twenty days in Biyara near the border with Iran. On September 23, thirty-seven PUK fighters were killed by Jund al-Islam in the village of Kheli Hama on the Sulaimaniya-Halabja road. Several died in an ambush, but the majority was reportedly killed after surrender. Photographs of the victims made available by the PUK showed that some of the prisoners' throats had been slit and some of the dead had been beheaded or mutilated, including by having their sexual organs severed. During the ensuing clashes, an estimated one hundred PUK fighters and some forty Jund al-Islam fighters were killed. The PUK regained control of Halabja and its vicinity by September 26, arresting suspected supporters or members of Jund al-Islam, and during October the fighting extended to Sharazur, Hawraman, and elsewhere. At least thirty-eight Jund al-Islam fighters were reportedly killed in these clashes, while some twenty-four others were cap-

tured or surrendered. Other Kurdish political parties, including the KDP, offered military assistance to the PUK. On October 11, the PUK declared a ceasefire and on October 25, it issued a thirty-day amnesty for Jund al-Islam fighters. The amnesty did not cover those responsible for the assassination of Francois Hariri, or those involved in the killing of the thirty-seven PUK fighters on September 23. The PUK also said that foreign nationals among them would not be permitted to remain in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Turkish government troops launched repeated military incursions into northern Iraq in pursuit of PKK members. In December 2000, Turkey deployed several thousand troops near the Iran-Iraq border, in order, the Turkish prime minister said on January 7, 2000, to provide "technical support" to PUK forces that had been engaged in military operations against the PKK since September 2000. According to PUK officials, some 120 PKK and thirty-five PUK fighters were killed in December 2000. The PUK accused the PKK of forcibly occupying forty-six villages in areas under PUK control. Turkish troops were also deployed in PUK-held territory in July and August, and in KDP-held areas near Zakho in September. Earlier, in January 2000, the KDP and the PUK adopted a unified policy to expel the PKK from Iraqi Kurdistan.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations

The "oil-for-food" humanitarian relief program for Iraq was extended for a further six months on December 5, 2000, under Security Council Resolution 1330. The Sanctions Committee was requested to approve lists of supplies and equipment in the electricity and housing sectors for "fast-track" approval procedures and to expand lists in other sectors. It approved the reduction of the allocation for the U.N. Compensation Fund from 30 percent to 25 percent, transferring the additional funds to meet the costs of humanitarian supplies to vulnerable groups in central and southern Iraq. It also allowed funds of up to 600 million euros to be used for the cost of installation and maintenance of the oil industry.

Divisions within the Security Council on the sanctions policy were evident during a debate over a draft resolution proposed by the U.K. on May 22, aimed at introducing "smart sanctions" by removing most restrictions on Iraq's civilian imports while tightening controls on military goods and oil revenue. Russia, China, and France opposed the resolution, in part over the list of prohibited "dual-use" goods which would remain subject to Security Council scrutiny. Russia introduced its own counter-resolution proposing the lifting of restrictions on civilian goods once weapons inspectors were fully deployed, while Iraq suspended its oil exports on June 4 in protest at the U.K. proposal. On June 1, the "oil-for-food" program was extended for one month under resolution 1352, giving the Security Council more time to debate the issue. By July 2, however, no consensus was reached and the U.K. postponed indefinitely a vote on its draft resolution. The "oil-for-food" program was renewed for a further five months on July 3 under resolution 1360.

Weapons inspectors of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), continued to be denied access to Iraq, with the government maintaining its rejection of resolution 1284. Talks held between Iraqi and U.N. officials in February failed to resolve the deadlock over weapons inspections, and UNMOVIC Executive Chairman Hans Blix said that documents submitted by Iraq as evidence that it no longer had weapons of mass destruction contained “very little new data.”

The Iraqi government also denied Yuli Vorontsov, the secretary-general’s high-level coordinator for the return of missing property and missing persons from Iraq to Kuwait, access to the country. In March, Vorontsov said Iraq was concealing information about an estimated 605 Kuwaiti and third-country nationals unaccounted for since February 1991. On July 3, Foreign Ministry officials rejected as “false facts” information submitted by Vorontsov to the Security Council on April 20, saying that his role was “partisan and less than objective.” The Iraqi government declined to participate in a meeting of the Tripartite Commission scheduled for July 19 under ICRC auspices, saying its participation was conditional on the withdrawal of the U.S. and the U.K. from the Tripartite Commission. It also called on Kuwait to account for an estimated 1,142 Iraqis which it said remained unaccounted for since 1991. In August, the Security Council urged Iraq to cooperate with Vorontsov and with the ICRC to clarify the fate of those missing.

On February 14, Benon Sevan, executive director of the U.N. Office of the Iraq Program (OIP), criticized Iraq for failing to utilize increased oil revenues “to reduce current malnutrition levels and improve the health status of the Iraqi people,” saying that the sums allocated for this in the government’s distribution plan were not “commensurate” with the problem. In a statement to the Security Council on March 8, he expressed “grave concern over the unacceptably high level of holds placed on applications,” including “some essential items required for key sectors such as electricity.” He urged “all parties concerned, including the Government of Iraq, to depoliticize and facilitate the program’s implementation in order to alleviate the continued suffering of the Iraqi people.” In mid-April, the OIP said the Sanctions Committee had delayed some 1,685 contracts valued at U.S. \$3.44 billion.

Relations with the U.N. deteriorated further when a Foreign Ministry official accused the OIP in July of financial mismanagement and impropriety, and in August requested regular audits of “oil-for-food” revenues by “independent, legal and neutral accountants.” Iraq also accused the U.N. in July of deliberately delaying a visit by World Health Organization (WHO) experts, adding that Sevan was “prejudiced against Iraq.” On September 5, Foreign Minister Najji Sabri al-Hadithi announced that Iraq had expelled the previous day five OIP personnel based in Baghdad, allegedly for supplying security information to “enemy states.” A sixth OIP employee had been expelled on August 31, and two peacekeepers of the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) on August 22 for allegedly violating “standard operating procedures by . . . taking photographs.” During a Security Council debate on Iraq on September 6, Iraq’s U.N. ambassador Muhammad al-Douri accused the U.N. of sending “spies” to Iraq. U.N. officials denied these charges, saying that Iraq had failed to provide any supporting evidence, and that the OIP had decided to “withdraw these personnel for strictly safety reasons.” Two other UNIKOM peacekeepers had left Iraq in April after government officials made

similar complaints against them. On October 25, Sevan announced he had submitted documents to the Security Council providing evidence that Iraqi oil estimated at U.S. \$10 million was smuggled in violation of U.N. sanctions. The government denied the charges.

Eight WHO experts visited Iraq from August 27 to 31 to finalize agreements with the government on research to be conducted on non-communicable diseases and congenital malformations in the country. In a September 5 statement, WHO announced that one major area of research agreed was a "study of environmental and other risk factors (including depleted uranium) to health." The government said that increases in cancers and birth defects among Iraqis were linked to the use of depleted uranium by allied forces during the 1991 Gulf war, and had requested the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) to sanction a fact-finding visit.

In a December 4, 2000 resolution, the General Assembly condemned "systematic, widespread and extremely grave violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law by the Government of Iraq, resulting in an all-pervasive repression and oppression sustained by broad-based discrimination and widespread terror." These included summary and arbitrary executions, routine and systematic torture, widespread use of the death penalty, and the repression of political opponents and their families. It urged the government to abide by its international human rights and humanitarian law obligations, to cooperate with U.N. human rights mechanisms, to implement relevant Security Council resolutions, and to cooperate with the Tripartite Commission over the fate of persons unaccounted for since the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991. The resolution also reiterated its call for the special rapporteur to be granted access to the country.

In a January 16 report to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, the special rapporteur on Iraq Andreas Mavrommatis said he continued to receive allegations of human rights violations by the government. These included arbitrary executions, frequent arrests of Shi'a religious figures and students, torture and ill-treatment of detainees, the retroactive application of death penalty legislation, and the forcible expulsion of Kurds and others from the Kirkuk region. The rapporteur said it was "absolutely necessary" that he be allowed to visit Iraq "to verify the truthfulness of the accounts received" and urged the government to agree to this. On April 18, the commission renewed the rapporteur's mandate for another year, condemned continuing violations and urged the government to cooperate with U.N. mechanisms and grant the special rapporteur access to Iraq. In a report to the General Assembly in September, the rapporteur detailed additional information on abuses against women, religious persecution, torture and extrajudicial killings, and on the humanitarian situation in Iraq. By November, the government had still not permitted him to visit the country.

On August 16, the U.N. Subcommittee on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights decided, without a vote, to reiterate its appeal to the international community and to the Security Council for the lifting of "the embargo provisions affecting the humanitarian situation of the population of Iraq." It also urged all governments, including that of Iraq, to facilitate the delivery of food, medical supplies, and other basic needs.

European Union

In May, the European Commission announced an increased “humanitarian assistance package” for Iraq. It allocated a total of 13 million euros for the year through the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), maintaining the E.U.’s position as Iraq’s largest humanitarian aid donor. The program was intended to fund projects in central and southern Iraq run by U.N. specialized agencies and NGOs in the areas of health, water and sanitation, and social rehabilitation.

In a resolution adopted on November 30, 2000, on the progress achieved in the implementation of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP), the European Parliament urged “the Council and Member States to take the initiative at the United Nations to propose the formation of an ad-hoc International Tribunal on Iraq to investigate the responsibility of Saddam Hussain’s regime in crimes of war, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide.”

The European Parliament debated Iraq on March 1, focusing on continued air strikes by U.S. and U.K. forces. Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten stressed the importance of maintaining sanctions until Iraq complied with Security Council resolutions concerning weapons inspections, but noted the importance of reviewing overall policy toward Iraq and “the possibility of replacing the present sanction regime by a ‘smart sanctions program’ and other appropriate measures,” while ensuring that Iraq did not develop weapons of mass destruction.

United States

Secretary of State Colin Powell testified before the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives on March 7 that the Bush administration would review policy toward the economic embargo on Iraq, the “no-fly zones,” and assistance to the Iraqi opposition. He said the sanctions “were starting to fall apart” and needed to be focused more clearly on preventing Iraq from developing weapons of mass destruction, while refuting claims that this represented an “easing” of pressure on the Iraqi authorities. In May, the U.S. backed a resolution introduced by the U.K. at a Security Council debate on Iraq, which aimed at removing restrictions on almost all civilian exports to Iraq while tightening controls over arms imports and over the smuggling of Iraqi oil through its neighboring countries.

The U.S. and the U.K. continued to police the “no-fly zones” over northern and southern Iraq from bases in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. In congressional testimony in March and May, Bush administration officials reaffirmed U.S. commitment to the policy, which they stated was necessary to prevent Iraq from building up its military forces and from launching air attacks on the Kurdish population in the north and the Arab Shi’a population in the south. In May, the Pentagon announced that two U.S. military commanders overseeing the “no-fly zone” operations had recommended a significant reduction in the number of sorties being flown by U.S. and U.K. pilots while maintaining the monitoring of Iraqi troop movements in these areas. The Iraqi government said three people were killed and eleven others injured

after air strikes by U.S. and U.K. planes near Baghdad on February 16, and that a further twenty-three people were killed and eleven injured as a result of air strikes on June 19 over a soccer field in the city of Mosul. U.S. and U.K. government officials denied these reports, and stated that no air strikes had been launched on June 19. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that any such incident “undoubtedly was the result of misdirected ground fire.”

Members of the opposition Iraqi National Congress (INC) began training in November 2000 in the collection of evidence for use in war crimes trials as part of a wider program sanctioned under the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act. On January 10, the Clinton administration approved U.S. \$12 million in aid to the INC for the distribution of food, medicine, and other humanitarian relief in government-controlled areas of Iraq. On January 30, the Bush administration authorized the INC to draw on the U.S. \$4 million approved by Congress in 2000 to fund opposition activities inside Iraq, including the gathering of evidence on human rights abuses by the Iraqi government. In testimony before the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives on March 29, the State Department said that the administration had “an active program with the Iraqi opposition . . . that could contribute to a change of leadership in Iraq,” and that over U.S. \$6.7 million had already been channeled through the INC and other groups. In mid-June, the State Department announced it was releasing an additional U.S. \$6 million to the INC to fund the sending of individuals into Iraq to gather human rights and war crimes information, publications, and television broadcasting.

In its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000*, released in February 2001, the State Department condemned Iraq’s human rights record as “extremely poor.” It said that “security forces committed widespread, serious, and systematic human rights abuses,” and that the government continued to be responsible for disappearances, torture and summary execution of suspected political opponents, and to subject citizens to arbitrary arrest and prolonged incommunicado detention. Iraq was also one of nine countries nominated by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom as being “the world’s worst religious-freedom violators.” In its *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 2001*, the State Department said that the Iraqi government’s violations of religious freedoms remained severe. It noted that in addition to arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention and torture, “the regime systematically has killed senior Shi’a clerics, desecrated Shi’a mosques and holy sites, interfered with Shi’a religious education, and prevented Shi’a adherents from performing their religious rites.”