



BRIEFING NOTE

Embargo/Issue date: 27 May 2010

ANNUAL REPORT AT A GLANCE

The *Amnesty International Report 2010* documents the state of human rights across 159 countries in 2009. It details a year in which – although important gains were made – accountability and effective justice seemed a remote ideal for many, as people's lives continued to be torn apart by repression, violence, discrimination, power plays and political stalemates.

Together, the different elements detail a year in which accountability and effective justice seemed a remote ideal for many, as people's lives continued to be torn apart by repression, violence, discrimination, power plays and political stalemates. But the report also celebrates real progress. It reveals how it is harder now for perpetrators of the worst crimes to feel confident that they will escape justice.

In the Middle East and North Africa, for example, governments in states such as Saudi Arabia, Syria and Tunisia remained highly intolerant of criticism, while Iran saw mounting repression in response to protests following the disputed presidential election in June. In Asia-Pacific, the Chinese government increased pressure on challenges to its authority, detaining and harassing human rights defenders and crushing the protests by migrant workers in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. In Myanmar the government continued to repress political dissent, with 2,100 political prisoners in detention. Among these, Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to an additional 18 months under house arrest after an unfair trial.

Violence against civilian populations continued across the globe. In the Americas, countries such as Brazil, Jamaica, Colombia and Mexico were plagued by hundreds of unlawful killings by security forces, while the human rights violations by the USA related to counter-terrorism persisted. Governments in Africa such as Guinea and Madagascar met criticism with excessive use of force and unlawful killings.

Roma communities across Europe faced discrimination in accessing a wide range of rights, including the rights to adequate housing and education. In May, the lives of boatloads of migrants and asylum-seekers from North Africa were put at risk by Italian authorities. They made no assessment of their protection needs and turned the boats back to Libya, a country with no functioning asylum procedure.

Many countries pushed for accountability only when politically expedient, and placed regional solidarity above the need to address the rights of victims of abuse. Thus, the USA and European states used their position in the UN Security Council to shield Israel from strong measures of accountability for alleged war crimes and possible crimes against humanity in Gaza.

But the signs of progress are there too. The contribution universal jurisdiction can make in addressing impunity was shown in November in Germany, when the President of the Democratic Liberation forces of Rwanda (FLRC) Ignace Murwanashyaka was arrested under a German warrant.

In South America, several trials of previous heads of state for human rights violations took place under national legislation, and in Peru Former President Alberto Fujimori was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment for grave human rights violations in 1991.

Regional and national institutions have addressed issues related to crimes under international law. In November, Mexico was condemned by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for failing to adequately investigate the enforced disappearance in 1974 of Rosendo Radilla.

The *Amnesty International Report 2010* argues that the demand for accountability is not confined to redress for killing or torture, but extends to the denial of all the rights that we need to live our lives in dignity.

Respect for all human rights must be an integral part of all national and international responses to the continuing food, energy, and financial crises. However, the rights to health, education, housing for the billions who live in poverty around the world are far from being recognized.

Every year, more than half a million women die from pregnancy-related complications. Maternal mortality rates for women in Sierra Leone, Peru, Burkina Faso and Nicaragua are directly affected by human rights abuses.

People were driven deeper into poverty by forced evictions across the world in 2009. In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, low-income families were forcibly evicted from a redevelopment site in the centre of the city, following years of harassment and intimidation by the authorities. In India, a site sacred to thousands of Indigenous people in the eastern state of Orissa is threatened by the development of an aluminium mining and processing plant.

The justice gap is not just between individuals and governments. Global business is growing in power and influence, but it is rarely held accountable. International law has expanded to protect global economic interests, through a wide range of international investment and trade agreements backed by enforcement mechanisms. But while economic interests have been able to make the law work for them, those most affected by their operations have often seen the law and protection of the law recede in the face of corporate power. Deregulation, the need to attract foreign investment, and provisions in trade and investment agreements have all squeezed the protection the law can provide people affected by corporate operations - particularly in developing countries.

Business operates in a global economy, but in the absence of a global rule of law.

This report demonstrates the courage of the wider human rights movement, as organizations and individuals, in their continuing work towards robust international and national laws and their insistence that these laws must be used to bring about real justice. It documents Amnesty International's work to expose human rights abuses and its demands for accountability for all.

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Embargoed until 00.01 EST Thursday 25 May 2010