



China

The Communist Party of China has governed China for nearly 70 years. Parties, political groups or unions that are not controlled by the Communist Party are not allowed. The communist party controls both the legal and judicial system, and courts are not independent. People trying to go to court to defend themselves against unlawful acts committed by the central or local government risk being prosecuted themselves, or they may be subjected to harassment or even torture to force them to withdraw their claims.

Both at national and local level, the Chinese authorities strike down hard against all those they fear could undermine their position of power and their control over what people think. Lawyers, journalists, bloggers, academics or human rights defenders that reveal human rights abuses or question the one-party system are charged with "causing division", "undermining the confidence in the government" or "undermining the state unity" and are sentenced to long prison terms. Religious groups that will not accept that the state governs their beliefs and traditions are severely persecuted. The same applies to members of certain ethnic groups that the government considers dangerous, including Uighurs and Tibetans.

China is also the country that uses the death penalty most widely. Although all statistics on the death penalty in China is kept secret, we must assume that more people are executed in China than in the rest of the world combined. Many are sentenced to death after unfair trials, partly without the aid of a lawyer.

While the Chinese government has stepped up censorship, suppression of freedom of expression and persecution of opponents, they have over the past decades also had a strong focus on economic development and poverty reduction. As the world's second largest economic power (after the USA), China is active in many international arenas and is keen on good relations with other countries. This opens opportunities to influence the Chinese government to show more respect for human rights.

Uyghurs

Uyghurs are a mostly Muslim Turk ethnic group mainly living in the Xinjiang province in north-western China. Chinese Uyghurs have been subjected to systematic and extensive human rights violations. These include arbitrary detention, imprisonment and torture as well as severe restrictions on religious freedom and cultural rights. Local authorities maintain tight control over religious practice and limit the use of the Uyghur language.

Many Han Chinese (the largest population group in China, which represents approximately 94% of the population) are moving to the Xinjiang region, taking control of more and more of both the land and the businesses there. This undermines the opportunity of Uyghurs to live in line with their culture. This, in addition to the discrimination and abuse Uyghurs are exposed to, create discontent and ethnic tensions.

Further information:

More information on the human rights situation in China can be found on the homepage of Amnesty's International Secretariat: www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/china

For more background information on China see for example:

BBC Country Profiles: www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877



Egypt

The human rights situation in Egypt has gone from bad to worse in recent years. It is prohibited to demonstrate, and freedom of expression is severely restricted. The authorities have also decided that they can shut down all human rights organizations they consider a threat to them. Tens of thousands of young activists and peaceful protesters have been arrested and imprisoned after unfair trials because they stood up for human rights. Many have been subjected to violence from the police and torture in prisons.

The Arab Spring

The Arab spring has become a name used for the uprisings that took place in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa in spring 2011, when citizens of those countries stood up and fought for democracy and human rights. The Arab Spring began with protests in Tunisia in December 2010, which led to the president resigning and being sentenced to prison. The country got a new constitution and a democratically elected president.

In Egypt, the uprising began in January 2011, with mass demonstrations on the Tahir Square in Cairo. Thousands of people took to the streets to demand more freedom, justice and democracy. The authorities tried to crush the protests with excessive use of force, and many protesters were injured or even killed. After nearly a month of protests, President Mubarak was forced to resign and Egypt's military took over leadership of the country.

In June 2012, Egypt held its first democratic elections, and Mohammed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood became president. He presented a proposal for a new constitution, which was strongly criticized for failing to include all human rights, including religious rights, women's rights and freedom of expression. This led to several demonstrations against President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. In summer 2013 the Egyptian military used the unrest as an opportunity to overthrow the elected president and take back control of the country.

After the army took power, the authorities tightened the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. It was forbidden to demonstrate and criticize the government. Many who demonstrated in support of President Morsi were injured and killed by security forces. In addition, hundreds of people have been sentenced to death in Egypt since the summer of 2013, often in unfair trials before military courts.

In 2014, General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who led the Egyptian army through the coup, was elected president. Mohammed Morsi was not allowed to participate in the election and in the summer of 2016, Morsi was sentenced to life in prison for "espionage".

Further information:

More information on the human rights situation in Egypt can be found on the homepage of Amnesty's International Secretariat: www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/egypt

For more background information on Egypt see for example:

BBC Country Profiles: www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13313370



Turkey

Human rights in Turkey have come under increased pressure in recent years. The country's authorities have stepped up the persecution of journalists and in other ways increased suppression of freedom of expression, including censorship of the internet. The right to peaceful assembly is severely restricted, and Turkish police often resort to excessive use of force to prevent or stop demonstrations against the government. Use of torture and other ill-treatment in police custody is widespread, and the government is doing virtually nothing to stop such crimes or bring those responsible to justice.

The Turkish authorities often use the country's extensive counterterrorism laws to justify excessive use of force and persecution of their opponents, especially against people who express criticism of the discrimination against Kurds.

In the summer of 2015, fierce fighting broke out between the Turkish army and the armed group The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This contributed to the deterioration of the human rights situation.

After a failed military coup attempt in the summer of 2016, Turkish authorities announced a state of emergency. Within a few weeks, over 130 media and other news outlets were closed and at least 89 journalists were arrested or indicted. Meanwhile, the government launched a wave of arrests of suspected opponents and dismissed many judges, prosecutors and teachers.

By the end of 2015, around 2.3 million refugees from Syria were registered in Turkey, in addition to around a quarter of a million refugees and asylum seekers from other countries. The vast majority of these receive no support from the state and were not allowed to work. In an agreement with the EU, Turkish authorities have agreed to prevent refugees who are in Turkey from travelling to Europe.

Kurds in Turkey

The Kurds are an ethnic group who mainly live in the border areas between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Kurds have their own language and their own culture that is different from the other population groups in the countries they live in. It is estimated that there are between 25 and 30 million Kurds in the world. Kurds are one of the largest ethnic groups in the Middle East and one of the largest ethnic groups in the world that do not have their own country.

About 20 percent of the population of Turkey is Kurdish. For decades, Kurds in Turkey have been subjected to discrimination and persecution. Turkish authorities have partially justified the persecution by referring to the activities of the PKK and other armed groups that use violence to promote the demand for Kurdish autonomy. However, the repression has affected the entire Kurdish population independently of their political beliefs or support for armed struggle.

Further information:

More information on the human rights situation in Turkey can be found on the homepage of Amnesty's International Secretariat: www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/turkey/

For more background information on Turkey see for example:

BBC Country Profiles: www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17988453



Malawi

Malawi is a small country of 18 million people, located in south-eastern Africa. Malawi is one of the least developed countries in Africa with widespread poverty and social and economic difficulties. A combination of a low median age and high child mortality contributes to life expectancy being 56 years for females and 53 years for males. About 80 percent of the population live in rural areas as subsistence farmers. Malawi is regularly exposed to droughts and floods leading to periods of serious food shortage.

Persecution of people with albinism in Malawi

In Malawi, there is an alarming wave of murder, abductions, mutilation and abuse against people with albinism. Albinism is an innate genetic condition that results in absence of pigmentation in the eyes, skin and hair. Ritual killings of people with albinism are influenced by superstitions and myths that their bones or body parts can bring riches. Ruthless criminals are involved in trade in organs and trafficking in persons with albinism.

Between December 2014 and April 2016, there were at least 18 murders of people with albinism in Malawi. Five others were abducted and their whereabouts are still unknown. The vast majority of the victims were children. On top of this, there have been dozens of reports of other crimes against people with albinism, including mutilations and attempted abductions.

In 2015, the President of Malawi stated that the attacks against people with albinism constituted a national crisis and a task force was established to improve the situation. Few effective measures have been taken, however, and the police lack the necessary training to handle these cases and hesitate to investigate the cases properly. Penalties against the few who have faced trial and been convicted for attacks against people with albinism have often been limited to low fines. Many victims are forced to continue living with their assailants in their local environment.

Murders and mutilations of people with albinism are sometimes committed by the family members of the victims. The police are reluctant to initiate independent investigations before charges have been pressed. These factors give reason to fear that many of these crimes are never uncovered.

More information

More information on the human rights situation in Malawi on Amnesty International's webpages. www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/malawi

More background information:

BBC Country Profiles: www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13864367

Association of People with Albinism in Malawi:

<https://www.facebook.com/AlbinismInMalawiApam/>



Peru

The year 2000 marked the end of two decades of armed conflict between different insurgent groups and the Peruvian army. The conflict cost at least 70 000 human lives and was the backdrop for political killings, forced disappearances, torture and other human rights violations. Today Peru has a democratic system and the country is experiencing a positive development with regard to security and human rights. The country still suffers from the consequences of the long and bloody conflict. In 2009, the former President of Peru, Alberto Fujimori, was convicted to 25 years in prison for being responsible for several killings and abductions during the armed conflict. Apart from him, few have been held accountable for their crimes. Many victims and their families are still fighting for justice.

Peru is one of the countries in South America that have had the largest economic growth over the last decade. Exports of gold, copper and other metals and minerals contribute to more than 40% of the total export income. For the largely poor population of the mountain areas where the riches are extracted the mining industry is a curse rather than a blessing. Mining destroys water resources and the traditional way of life and cultivation of the land. Amnesty International has also received reports about farmers being driven from their land by force after the discovery of gold. Indigenous people are especially vulnerable because of poverty and discrimination.

Environmental damage and forced evictions because of the mining industry have led to a series of local conflicts. Instead of protecting the farmers against violations, government forces tend to side with the influential mining companies and participate in brutal assaults on people who refuse to be evicted from their homes.

Another major human rights issue in Peru is the lack of education about gender and sexuality. Many Peruvian girls who get pregnant are forced to quit school and their opportunity to affect their own future is therefore very limited. With money from Operation Days Work 2015, Amnesty has established a project contributing to young Peruvian's right to decide over their own body.

More information

More information on the human rights situation in Peru on Amnesty International's webpages: www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/peru

More background information on Peru:

BBC Country Profiles: www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19928905



USA

The United States of America have had an uninterrupted democracy since the founding of the country in 1776. As one of the oldest democracies in the world, the USA was one of the first countries in the world to include human rights in their constitution.

Nonetheless, the USA faces many serious human rights challenges. The country has not ratified the UN convention on economic, social and cultural rights, and American authorities do not recognize the rights to food, health care, housing etc. as human rights of equal status to, for example, freedom of speech, freedom of religion or the right to fair trial. Also, the U.S. is one of only three countries in the world (in addition to Somalia and South Sudan) that have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In several areas, American law and practice with regard to children is in conflict with the almost universally accepted rights of the child.

The USA also has a problem with excessive use of force by the police, especially against members of ethnic minority. In numerous cases police officers on duty have killed African Americans without there being any danger for their own or other people's lives. This has caused public protests and riots, but police officers are still rarely punished for excessive use of force.

In 2015, more than 80 000 people were imprisoned under cruel or inhumane conditions in regular or "super maximum security" prisons. Not only people who have committed the most serious offences are serving their sentence in these prisons. Also, people who have committed several minor offences can end up in the notorious Supermax prisons, sometimes for decades.

Several states still practice the death penalty and executions take place every year. Many of those who are sentenced to death come from a background of poverty and/or an ethnic minority.

The so-called war on terror

After the horrific terror attacks against New York City and Washington D.C. on September 11· 2001, where thousands of people were killed, the USA declared war on international terrorism. The president was given broad powers which he among others used to set up a detention camp for people suspected of having connections to terrorism. To keep American courts from getting involved in the treatment of these prisoners, the camp was set up on an American military base at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. At Guantánamo, people have been detained indefinitely, and many have been subjected to torture or other ill treatment. The vast majority of those prisoners were never formally charged with a crime, and all have been denied the right to a fair trial before an independent civilian criminal court.

It is in this context that agencies dealing with intelligence, surveillance and law enforcement were given more power. Among other things, people have been abducted from various places around the world, detained in secret prisons, interrogated without lawyers and tortured. When Barack Obama took over as President in 2008 he ordered a halt to all use of torture and other ill treatment and ordered the Guantánamo prison camp to be closed. However, he has opposed efforts to secure accountability and has been unsuccessful in closing Guantánamo. Furthermore, the prosecution of whistle-blowers revealing possible human rights violations and other government misconduct has become more frequent under his administration.



American intelligence services have carried out massive surveillance of telephone and digital communication, targeted not only against suspected criminals, but against more or less everybody both inside and outside the USA. Edward Snowden's revelations have led to important legislative changes.

More information

More information on the human rights situation in USA on Amnesty International's webpages:
www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/united-states-of-america