



Functional Bureau Strategy

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)

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1. Executive Statement

As outlined in the 2017 National Security Strategy, “political problems are at the root of most state fragility. The United States will prioritize programs that empower reform minded governments, people, and civil society.” Some of our most pressing national security threats are, at their core, a result of poor governance, weak or nonexistent government institutions, corruption, lack of economic opportunity, and/or human rights abuses. Terrorists and criminals thrive where governments are weak, corruption is rampant, faith in government institutions is low, and avenues to express grievances are closed. Promoting respect for human rights, labor rights, and democracy through U.S. foreign policy contributes peace, prosperity, and stability abroad, which curtails threats to the homeland and enhances the sustainability of U.S. security partnerships. To do so is therefore integral to our national security.

American strength and influence lies in our fundamental democratic identity stemming from our founding documents and based on the rule of law, individual freedoms, and protection of human rights. The mission of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) is to champion American ideals as a means of combating the spread of authoritarianism, terrorism, and subversion of sovereign democracies. This principled and practical approach to this key aspect of foreign policy is a fundamental component of an “America First” National Security Strategy.

In concert with a broad range of stakeholders, DRL advances this strategy by:

- engaging in public, private, bilateral, international, multi-lateral and multi-stakeholder diplomacy to promote respect for freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and religion and strengthen democratic institutions;
- supporting human rights, labor, and democracy defenders and organizations both diplomatically and through programs implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- promoting fair and reciprocal trade by combating labor rights abuses, ensuring trade agreements and U.S. trading partners adhere to high labor standards, and that their businesses respect human rights and labor standards;
- helping the State and Defense Departments ensure that U.S. security assistance programs do not assist those engaged in gross violations of human rights;
- utilizing visa restrictions and economic sanctions to deny benefits to those who undermine democracy or violate individual human rights; and
- informing U.S. and foreign audiences of the human rights situation in each country in the world through the publication of annual congressional reports on human rights, child soldiers, labor, and international religious freedom practices.

U.S. leadership in promoting American values globally is critical in the current environment, in which civil society and individual voices are under threat and millions of individuals are subjected to egregious human rights violations and abuses. Efforts by the United States to encourage good governance, help local actors build democratic institutions, and safeguard

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individuals from human rights violations remain core U.S. policy objectives but also a challenging, long-term undertaking. These efforts are often complicated by obstructive actions by authoritarian governments and violent non-state actors.

This Functional Bureau Strategy (FBS) addresses these risks and challenges and articulates U.S. policy and DRL's approach to countering global threats and advancing democracy, human rights, and labor standards. DRL is committed to careful stewardship of limited taxpayer resources and will perform annual assessments to review progress made on the goals and objectives established in this FBS.

2. Bureau Strategic Framework

Bureau Goal 1: Democracy: Enhance global stability by promoting growth of democratic institutions, including during democratic transitions, around the world.

Objective 1.1: Support democratic institutions, including the development of democratic political parties, labor unions and business associations, in countries where they are under assault or consolidating.

Objective 1.2: Promote free, fair and competitive democratic elections and other democratic processes open to all in places where election processes are lacking in credibility or under threat.

Bureau Goal 2: International Religious Freedom: Promote international religious freedom, increase protection of religious minorities, and combat intolerance and violent extremism.

Objective 2.1: Advocate for international religious freedom and encourage foreign governments to improve their overall respect for religious freedom and protection of religious minorities.

Objective 2.2: Increase diplomatic collaboration with bilateral and multi-lateral partners and build coalitions with like-minded public and private sector actors to support and expand religious freedom and to address the root causes of terrorism.

Bureau Goal 3: Increase respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, both online and offline.

Objective 3.1: Persuade governments to end serious abuses of human rights, including torture, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, censorship, criminal penalties for peaceful expression, restrictions on free association and peaceful assembly, and undue restrictions on independent media.

Objective 3.2: Increase capacity of partners and allies to ensure government institutions and security forces do not abuse the rights of citizens.

Objective 3.3: Defend human rights standards internationally to ensure they remain consistent with American values.

Objective 3.4: In partnership with the private sector, strive for global standards that promote responsible business conduct, maintaining a level playing field for American businesses as they respect human rights and fundamental freedoms abroad.

Bureau Goal 4: Promote internationally recognized worker rights and acceptable conditions of work abroad.

Objective 4.1: Support civil society organizations, workers, and labor organizations through diplomatic engagement and targeted foreign assistance to improve workers' capacity to organize, bargain collectively, and advocate for themselves.

Objective 4.2: Leverage U.S. economic engagement and labor rights conditionality in U.S. trade agreements and preference programs to level the playing field for U.S. workers, open new markets, and support high labor standards globally.

Objective 4.3: Advance the global promotion of labor rights by strengthening diplomatic engagement to encourage like-minded countries, multi-lateral organizations, and private sector partners to join the United States in actively promoting internationally recognized worker rights.

Management Goal: Ensure accountability to the American taxpayer.

Management Objective: Strengthen the effectiveness of our expenditures by increasing the use of evidence in decision-making, building partner capacity, and exploring

innovative approaches to conduct our work, including providing State Department officials with in-house training on ways to most effectively advance DRL-related issues.

3. Goals and Objectives

Bureau Goal 1: Democracy: Enhance global stability by promoting growth of democratic institutions, including during democratic transitions, around the world.

a. Description and Linkages

Democratic governance reflects U.S. values, and the spread of well-functioning democracies advances U.S. influence, prosperity, and security. The 2017 National Security Strategy and Strategic Objective 1.3 of the 2018-2022 U.S. Department of State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan make clear that in order to advance our common security, we must address the underlying political deficits that foster instability, enable radicalization, promote terrorism, and undermine the ability of governments to manage threats within their borders. These deficits often have roots in weak or nonexistent democratic institutions. Democratic governments are more likely to work with the United States to solve problems on the global stage, and their vibrant civil societies lead to innovation and entrepreneurship that benefits all individuals, and mitigates the potential for these societies to produce threats to the U.S. homeland.

Bureau Objective 1.1: Support democratic institutions, including the development of democratic political parties, labor unions and business associations, in countries where they are under assault or consolidating.

a. Justification

Governments that respect the rights of their citizens and allow their citizens to bring about change through peaceful, democratic political processes remain the best vehicle for prosperity and peace. Studies show that democratic progress can take decades and setbacks are common. Absent consistent engagement, authoritarian governments will never permit democracy-building measures and will thus delay progress on other security, political, or economic priorities. In the long term, early support of democratic principles in such countries will lessen the risk for a future violent overthrow that could suddenly damage U.S. strategic interests or partnerships, or internal instability that could negatively affect global security and economic interests.

Bureau Objective 1.2: Promote free, fair and competitive democratic elections and other democratic processes open to all in places where election processes are lacking in credibility or under threat.

a. Justification

An informed and engaged citizenry is a fundamental requirement for a free, sovereign, and resilient nation. Individuals and groups that are marginalized from peaceful political processes risk becoming engaged in violent extremism. These risks are mitigated by engaging youth as active citizens and future leaders, thus ensuring long-term democratic

advancement and stability. It also means including as equal players in the democratic political process traditionally underrepresented groups in society. For example, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Act, signed by President Trump in October 2017, promotes women's leadership and inclusion in decision-making.

Bureau Goal 2: International Religious Freedom: Promote international religious freedom, increase protection of religious minorities, and combat intolerance and violent extremism.

a. Description and Linkages

The right to exercise one's freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is a human right and is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. As the 2017 National Security Strategy and Strategic Objective 1.2 of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan state, the United States remains committed to advancing religious freedom and advocating on behalf of threatened minorities. The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, which created DRL's Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) and the position of Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, affirms and institutionalizes this commitment to promoting religious freedom around the world.

DRL continues to prioritize the integration of religious freedom into the U.S. government's broader foreign policy objectives. IRF monitors religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommends and implements policies in respective regions or countries, produces the annual International Religious Freedom Reports, identifies the most egregious religious freedom violators, and recommends their designation by the Secretary as "Countries of Particular Concern" (CPCs) or "Entities of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act as well as the consequent sanctions policies toward those countries. Under recently passed Congressional legislation, the Department will also expand training on religious freedom issues for Department personnel.

Bureau Objective 2.1: Advocate for international religious freedom and encourage foreign governments to improve their overall respect for religious freedom and protection of religious minorities.

a. Justification

Respect for religious freedom is both a core American value and a fundamental human right reflected in numerous international instruments, such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Helsinki Accords, and other international agreements. Governments are expected to abide by their obligations and commitments regarding freedom of religion. In far too many countries, individuals are experiencing significant restrictions on religious practice, as well as societal intolerance of, and violence against, members of religious minority groups.

Bureau Objective 2.2: Increase diplomatic collaboration with bilateral and multi-lateral partners and build coalitions with like-minded public and private sector actors to support and expand religious freedom and to address the root causes of terrorism.

a. Justification

Promoting religious freedom upholds a human right that also serves as a source of stability in countries worldwide. Countries are more secure and stable when their governments safeguard religious freedom for all persons, ensure accountability for religious-based violence, adopt legal protections for religious minorities, and promote societal respect for religious diversity. Countries that seek to suppress one or more religious community can become incubators of extremism and violence. Advancing religious freedom is a necessary component in addressing the drivers of violent extremism and terrorism. Protecting this human right is critical to creating the civic space necessary to counter violent extremist narratives and ideologies.

Bureau Goal 3: Increase respect for human rights standards and fundamental freedoms, both online and offline.

a. Description and Linkages

The 2017 National Security Strategy and Strategic Objectives 1.3 and 3.3 of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan prioritize support for the dignity of persons. The United States works worldwide to promote and protect the human rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including an individual's freedom to speak one's mind, peacefully assemble and associate without fear, to practice or not practice religion, and choose one's own leaders through free and fair competitive elections. Those rights are to be respected for all people, including ethnic, racial, and religious minorities; women; youth; LGBTI individuals; indigenous peoples; persons with disabilities; and other marginalized populations.

Protecting individuals from violence and discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other invidious grounds reduces national security risks and allows societies to reach their full potential. Barriers to equal opportunity include exclusions from or failure to implement a country's legal framework, punitive legal frameworks and policies, cultural attitudes that produce discrimination, and bias-motivated crime and violence. DRL addresses all such barriers with a variety of tools, including bilateral and multi-lateral engagements, annual reports to Congress, visa, trade, and economic sanctions and incentives, and country-specific action plans.

Security actors and institutions also play a critical role in advancing and protecting human rights. Human rights issues are a core element of U.S. security policies, strategies, and laws. Section 620M (the Leahy amendment) of the FAA, and a comparable provision in the Department of Defense appropriations legislation, prohibit the provision of training or assistance to foreign security forces where there is credible information of gross violations of

human rights, and DRL vets all such forces for both agencies. Similarly, the licensing of exports of arms and munitions pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act is subject to human rights vetting. The Bureau supports the State Department representative who serves on the board of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers' Association, which seeks to verify that contracted private security companies (PSCs) providing services in complex or high-threat environments are operating at high standards and with respect for human rights; this code also covers usage of PSCs by the Department of State.

Bureau Objective 3.1: Persuade governments to end serious abuses of human rights, including torture, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, censorship, criminal penalties for peaceful expression, restrictions on free association and peaceful assembly, and undue restrictions on independent media.

a. Justification

Individual human rights defenders and civil society organizations are the cornerstone of human rights progress within a country, identifying flaws in foreign government policies and publicizing policy alternatives, corruption, and mismanagement, often at great personal risk. But they cannot serve their function if they are under constant threat of death, injury or incarceration, and this in turn places an undue burden on the U.S. and like-minded nations to advocate for reform because local players are unable to do so. Successful efforts to persuade other governments to reduce such obstacles therefore have a huge multiplier effect in creating strong, resilient, sovereign countries that make good partners for the United States.

Bureau Objective 3.2: Increase capacity of partners and allies to ensure government institutions and security forces do not abuse the rights of citizens.

a. Justification

Partnerships with government institutions and security forces are essential to U.S. national security, promoting internal and regional stability, addressing transnational criminal threats, and promoting human security and just societies. A key element of those partnerships is security sector assistance (SSA). Consistent with U.S. law and policy, foreign security forces that have committed gross human rights violations are not eligible for U.S. assistance unless the perpetrators are brought to justice. Ensuring more governments are carrying out security operations responsibly and building and reforming security sectors to protect human rights builds public trust in these institutions and eliminates a driver of violent extremism.

Bureau Objective 3.3: Defend human rights standards internationally to ensure they remain consistent with American values.

a. Justification

The overarching goal of the United States' human rights efforts is to strengthen democratic values, institutions, processes and actors. Governments that share the U.S. commitment to fundamental freedoms make stronger allies and partners. Authoritarian actors seek to

undermine the United States and its allies in part by seeking to redefine internationally-recognized human rights standards to legitimize their malign practices both internally and against sovereign democracies, and to erode one of our strongest assets in our struggle with them — the universal appeal of American values.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are addressed multi-laterally in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee, the International Labour Organization, as well as within regional multi-lateral bodies (the OAS, OSCE, ASEAN, AU, OECD etc). Multi-stakeholder forums, such as the Community of Democracies, Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers Association, Equal Rights Coalition, and Open Government Partnership, also allow the United States to advance respect for democratic governance and human rights. The United States will ensure coordination with our broader multi-lateral diplomatic efforts.

Bureau Objective 3.4: In partnership with the private sector, strive for global standards that promote responsible business conduct, maintaining a level playing field for American businesses as they respect human rights and fundamental freedoms abroad.

a. Justification

We strive to harness the vast potential of U.S. business to contribute to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and ensure that U.S. businesses interests are included in the networks and institutions that reflect our values, protect our people, and advance our economic interests. We will press foreign business to emulate best practices on business and human rights through credible, multi-stakeholder collaborative efforts, demonstrating U.S. business leadership in this space.

The United States' commitment to advancing responsible business conduct serves as a comparative advantage for U.S. companies. U.S. companies' commitment to "doing well by doing good," differentiates them from foreign competitors. As the international landscape for trade and investment becomes increasingly competitive, the reputation of the United States as a country which produces high-quality goods and services at a high ethical standard strengthens the nation's reputation as a key partner in economic and commercial engagement. Increasing and maintaining these engagements furthers American economic interests and national security.

Bureau Goal 4: Promote internationally recognized worker rights and acceptable conditions of work abroad.

a. Description and Linkages

As outlined in Strategic Objective 2.2 of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan, the United States is committed to promoting healthy, educated, and productive populations in partner countries to drive inclusive and sustainable development and support U.S. prosperity and security objectives. In addition, as outlined in Strategic Objective 2.1 of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan, a robust and secure U.S. economy that creates new American jobs depends on strong economic growth and promoting free, fair, and reciprocal

trade relationships with countries around the world – in part by ensuring foreign governments do not employ practices such as weak labor rights systems to compete unfairly. Worker rights are part of the essential foundation for durable democracies, sustained prosperity, and decent work. Freedom of association and collective bargaining and healthy industrial relations systems are fundamental to achieving equitable growth, which helps create a level playing field for American workers.

DRL’s engagement on advancing labor rights is a Congressional mandate. DRL promotes internationally recognized worker rights as described in U.S. trade law and in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted in 1998. The Declaration is an expression of commitment by governments, and employers' and workers' organizations to respect and promote principles and rights at work in four areas: freedom of association and the right to collectively bargain, the elimination of forced labor, the abolition of child labor, and the elimination of employment discrimination. U.S. trade legislation also defines internationally recognized worker rights to include acceptable conditions of work in the areas of wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health. DRL initiatives further U.S. foreign policy goals related to human rights, democracy promotion, trade, and sustainable growth, by engaging with workers, governments, multi-lateral organizations, and the private sector. DRL also funds a range of programming focused on advancing labor rights and empowering workers throughout the world.

Bureau Objective 4.1: Support civil society organizations, workers, and labor organizations through diplomatic engagement and targeted foreign assistance to improve workers’ capacity to organize, bargain collectively, and advocate for themselves.

a. Justification

Workers are their own best advocates. Their right and capacity to organize, bargain collectively, and advocate for themselves is crucial. Labor organizations also play a role in broader civil society efforts to ensure healthy economic and political institutions. Independent unions’ internal democratic procedures can help develop democratic practices at the grassroots level. Moreover, worker organizations often have broad agendas and representation across all societal groups, making them an important element of promoting sustainable democracies and valuable partners in many countries where DRL works.

Bureau Objective 4.2: Leverage U.S. economic engagement and labor rights conditionality in U.S. trade agreements and preference programs to level the playing field for U.S. workers, open new markets, and support high labor standards globally.

a. Justification

Ensuring U.S. trading partners enforce internationally recognized worker rights promotes a level playing field for U.S. investments and workers, and creates stronger trading partners and a larger global middle class, growing the global market for U.S. exports and services and helping ensure U.S. workers are not competing against workers in situations of forced or child labor globally. Investment opportunities for U.S. companies are greater in countries with accountable governments that have open and transparent regulations, protect labor

rights, respect the rule of law, and enable equal access to opportunities. Further, promotion of fundamental freedoms and non-discrimination for all enables entrepreneurship, innovation, and inclusive economic growth.

Bureau Objective 4.3: Advance the global promotion of labor rights by strengthening diplomatic engagement to encourage like-minded countries, multi-lateral organizations, and private sector partners to join the United States in actively promoting internationally recognized worker rights.

a. Justification

Like-minded governments, multi-lateral organizations and private sector partners can provide additional support, incentives, and solutions for driving progress on labor rights. Our engagement with these entities focuses on placing pressure on bad actors and identifying solutions to uphold the tenets of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and improve working conditions and incomes around the world.

4. Management Goal

Management Goal: Ensure accountability to the American taxpayer.

a. Description and Linkages

In furtherance of Goal 4 of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan, DRL must be an effective, careful steward of U.S. resources. The bureau continues to conduct programs that further critical U.S. statutory requirements utilizing digital diplomacy, technological platforms, and public-private partnerships to contain expenditures.

Management Objective: Strengthen the effectiveness of our expenditures by increasing the use of evidence in decision-making, building partner capacity, and exploring innovative approaches to conduct our work, including providing State Department officials with in-house training on ways to most effectively advance DRL-related issues.

a. Justification

Program evaluations help the bureau understand which programs are more appropriate for achieving a particular goal. Many programs that work in closed societies and/or on very sensitive political issues demand flexibility and an ability to adapt to changing political contexts, in many cases involving repression. Effective program design is grounded in a qualitative analysis of the context and issue, supplemented – where possible – by empirical evidence. Learning from ongoing work allows for the expansion of successful work to new contexts. Moreover, evaluations help ensure programs abide by the “do no harm principle.” Increased monitoring and evaluation ensures that programs have a positive impact, are cost effective, and do not result in negative unintended consequences.