2013 among the worst years for human rights

By Daniel Rothman, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — With a Syrian chemical weapons attack that killed more than 1,000 civilians, violent crackdowns against protesters in Turkey and Ukraine and a string of anti-gay laws from Russia to Uganda, human rights abuses last year ranked among the worst in years, the State Department concluded Thursday in its annual review of more than 200 countries and territories.

"The year 2013 may well be known for some of the most egregious atrocities in recent memory," Uzra Zeya, acting assistant secretary of State for democracy, human rights and labor, said during a briefing Thursday.

In addition to highlighting violence in Syria, Secretary of State John Kerry, who also attended the briefing, pointed to democratic back-sliding in several nations that threw off dictatorships during the "Arab Spring," including Egypt.

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