

UPR Info - Pre-session WG Statement - Keyanna Jones

August 25-29, 2025

My name is Keyanna Jones. I am a mother, wife, pastor, and longtime community organizer and activist from Atlanta, Georgia. As a Black woman in the United States, I have never been viewed as innocent, but in expressing solidarity with other oppressed people, in being public with my demands for human rights for all, I am deemed an even greater threat and face criminalization. This is the second time I travel to Geneva to speak before member states and human rights bodies; in 2023, I and my family faced extreme doxxing and harassment in the days leading up to my participation in the Human Rights Committee's review of the U.S. But I am back. Because I need you to understand the stakes.

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I will address discrete aspects of the current state of human rights in the United States, including those covered in our coalition report entitled "Entrenching Authoritarianism", namely: the metastasizing terrorism framework, the shrinking space for civil society, and an infrastructure of surveillance.

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However, I am speaking to you while the Trump administration has deployed the military domestically against unhoused people; where the President has recently fired the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics because he didn't like her data; where the executive is mandating the redrawing of electoral maps and censoring exhibits on slavery at national museums; and where transgender people employed by the federal government will no longer receive health coverage for gender-affirming care. These are hallmarks of authoritarian regimes.

Your courage in this moment is consequential.

Theme 1: The Metastasizing "Terrorism" Framework - from Guantánamo to migrants and human rights defenders (Slide 4)

Members states have used successive UPR processes to condemn the U.S.' so-called counter-terrorism operations, from extrajudicial executions, torture, and drone strikes to the continued existence of Guantanamo Bay prison. However, to date, there has been no attention to the underlying infrastructure and ideology of the ever-expanding "terrorism" framework that has allowed successive U.S. administrations to deem disfavored viewpoints, advocacy and organizing as "terrorism."

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61 people who were protesting the construction of a massive police training facility, known as Cop City, currently face domestic terrorism charges. These environmental and racial justice advocates were so demonized that one young protestor, known as Tortuguita, was killed by Georgia State Patrol as they (Tortuguita) sat cross legged in protest. In March 2025, the Trump administration invoked the Alien Enemies Act, claiming that migrants represented an “invasion” so as to justify the suspension of human rights, including detaining and disappearing over 200 Venezuelan men to El Salvador where they faced torture and abuse in the CECOT prison. Also this spring, the Trump administration detained and attempted to deport Palestinian rights advocate Mahmoud Khalil, claiming that his advocacy for his people who are experiencing a genocide, made him a “national security threat.”

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In addition to continuing to call on the closure of Guantanamo, we recommend that Member States directly address the U.S.’ severely bloated counterterrorism and national security infrastructure, and demand that the U.S.:

1. Eliminate the laws and policies of the so-called “War on Terror” that are ripe for abuse against activists as well as Black, Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Indigenous, Latinx, and LGBTQIA+ communities.
2. Cease the weaponization of the terrorism framework and immediately repeal 18 U.S.C. §2339B of the material support statute.

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Theme 2: Criminalization of civil society and the escalating environment of repression

Previous UPRs did not anticipate or address this dramatic crackdown on civil society and we encourage specific attention to the attacks on NGOs that do not align with the Trump administration’s regressive ideological stances, as well as the ongoing campaign against Palestinian rights advocates. In January 2025, the Trump administration announced a federal funding freeze for organizations promoting diversity, immigrants rights and climate justice. Earlier this summer, Congress launched a probe on over 200 organizations that protected the rights of migrants and/or challenged the Trump administration in court. Many of our organizations before you today are part of that list.

The government is also weaponizing criminal law, immigration enforcement, and general retaliation to chill and punish any dissent against Israel’s U.S.-backed genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. In the spring of 2024 alone, advocates tracked over 3,000 student, professor, and solidarity activist arrests on more than 80 campuses. Two executive orders signed in January 2025 weaponize federal authority to investigate, surveil, and deport students under the guise of combating antisemitism and protecting national security.

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We recommend, therefore, that you call on the U.S. to:

1. Repeal all executive orders and directives that reduce or eliminate funding for nongovernmental organizations; or that target lawyers and law firms that have represented parties or entities that have taken a position in opposition to President Trump;
2. Cease its policy and practice of targeting political dissenters, including noncitizens, on the basis of their support for Palestinian rights.

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Theme 3: The human rights impact of the U.S.' sprawling infrastructure of surveillance

Despite six countries recognizing the human rights violations of the U.S. surveillance infrastructure in 2020, the U.S. is in a time of heightened repression. As such, we urge specific attention to how such surveillance disincentivizes people from exercising their human rights, including the right to protest.

We are specifically concerned with Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which permits intelligence agencies to spy on foreign individuals without a warrant or any individualized court review. Further, since 2020, DHS has created and operated a sweeping, law-enforcement wide database of DNA. This aggregation of highly-sensitive data is part of a sprawling infrastructure that includes geolocation data, social media monitoring, and spyware technologies. The purpose of these invasive government surveillance practices is to compile as much data as possible to carry out any goal that might arise for the agency at any time in the future.

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We therefore recommend that Member States specifically call on the U.S. to:

1. Repeal any law or data practice that violates core human rights protections, e.g., Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, Section (1)(1)(A) of the DNA Fingerprint Act or dragnet surveillance;
2. Disclose all the details relating to DHS's contract with Paragon Solutions (US) Inc.

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This Universal Periodic Review could not come at a more important time, which is why the Trump administration has indicated that it will not participate in this process. We urge you to demonstrate courage, to carry out this review, and to join civil society in our shared effort to

resist what Secretary General António Guterres calls the global contagion of authoritarianism, and reaffirm our commitment to human rights.

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