

Human Rights in the United States of America

Submission to the 22nd Session of the
United Nations Universal Periodic Review

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National Promotion & Protection of Human Rights

Process, Procedures and Potential Institutions

In the first cycle, the U.S. did an excellent campaign in the preparation phase coordinating multiple city coordination in a dozen locations. Also, the town hall meeting was also an innovation that should inspire more states during the UPR. Unfortunately, since then, the United States has reverted back to the general practice of inside the beltway meetings with short notice preventing widening the national human rights conversation. We call for a renewed campaign in the same spirit of the first cycle.

The United States of America should work in partnership with stakeholders to coordinate consultations that allow for contributions from all communities and cities across the country. The United States of America should consult and coordinate with the US Human Rights Network and other national NGOs with grassroots membership for a series of consultations with at least 3-4 weeks announcement so civil society can plan, prepare and participate properly. We note that the lack of participation for stakeholders to draft and determine the agenda has created situation that doesn't foster dialogue but a rushed discussion. We propose a process similar to the most recent UPR Consultation on Immigration and Labor (September 12, 2014) that involved a shared process of coordination among civil society and specific US departments and agencies is a step in the right direction for future consultations.

The United States of America did create a framework for followup with Working Groups and other initiatives. Unfortunately, there was little action during the mid-term review. There was also very little leading up to the submission of the stakeholder reports until the final months. While there were Working Groups established, they didn't meet and engage with stakeholders following the UPR. This is important because there was not enough realization of recommendations, let alone conversations across the country

The United States of America must create a permanent institution based on the Paris Principles. We propose amending the current, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights become the U.S. Commission on Civil and Human Rights. We propose it host regular meetings in advance to allow for participation of all civil society to assist the government at federal, state and city level to realize future recommendations.

We note the lack of followup, therefore, we also propose for U.S. government to provide a calendar of consultations and national conversations before departing Geneva at the 2nd review in May 2014. This is vital for stakeholders to participate in the national discussion from May - September 2015 at the adoption. This will provide a great base for building a genuine dialogue and partnership with civil society. At the adoption, in September 2015, we can see if there is positive movement and if a new direction will be determined for the mid-term follow-up review that can continue the practices from May - September. We also call for another Town Hall meeting at the review with mechanisms for followup that involve and include stakeholders.

We believe human rights education is vital for promoting fundamental freedoms. We note that only 39 states even mention "human rights" in their social studies standards with only 22 containing the mention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

which was chaired by an American Eleanor Roosevelt. We believe human rights education should be more widespread at the national level. We believe there must be improved efforts at the federal level to guarantee human rights education is a national priority.

We call for a campaign to coordinate and create a Human Rights Education National Plan of Action. The National Plan of Action must be created and completed before the next UPR with a followup update provided at the mid-term review of the second cycle. The US can submit its reports to the OHCHR on implementation of the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education regularly with civil society involvement. The U.S. should make a focal point to achieve this recommendation and ensure the close cooperation on state and local level. There should also be adequate support for teacher training in partnership with national NGOs leading the effort for greater human rights education.

The record of ratification must be improved. The U.S. should immediately ratify the ICESCR, CEDAW, CRC, CMW, CED and CRPD. At the recent review of CERD, the U.S. was reminded they received so many questions regarding women and children because of the lack of opportunity for civil society to have a conversation regarding women's and children's rights in the United States of America. The U.S. should make ratification a national priority.

Major Issues & Major Impacts Due to Human Rights Violations

Climate Change

The U.S. should take national action to combat climate change and reduce the CO2 emissions of the country. The US should take a leadership role in the upcoming post 2015 development agenda and the Paris UNFCCC agreement that is rooted in human rights and recognizes the impacts of climate change on Pacific Islands States in the imminent future. The U.S. must recognize the rights being violated due to the climate change crisis from right to self-determination, water, food and health and form foreign policy that protects rights of Small Island States.

Indigenous Peoples Rights

The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent relating to Indigenous Peoples must be central to domestic and foreign policy. The important issue of sacred sites must be recognized and realized across the United States of America. In Hawai'i, the issue of sacred sites must be respected considering Mauna Kea mountaintop. The sacred site of this mountain to Kanaka Maoli must be recognized regarding potential new telescopes. There must also be respect for the rights of Kanaka Maoli to worship at Mauna Kea.

Violence Against Women in the Military

The scourge of violence against women must end in the United States. Specifically, the situation of women in the Armed Forces and sexual violence must be addressed.

The U.S. must make it a national priority and immediately adopt legislation to protect women in the military branches. There must also be creation of a national mechanism for accountability in the Armed Forces if a charge is raised by women that have been victimized while serving the country in the military.