



ELIZKA RELIEF FOUNDATION

Report of Elizka Relief Foundation to The Universal Periodic Review Mechanism Regarding The United States of America

Elizka Relief Foundation presents this report ahead of the fourth review of United States under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. It is noteworthy that United States has undergone three previous rounds of the UPR on November 9, 2010, May 22, 2015, and most recently on November 9, 2020. During the third round of the UPR, United States received 347 recommendations. It fully or partially accepted a total of 280 recommendations, while United States rejected 67 recommendations.

However, tracking the implementation of the commitments accepted by United States during previous reviews reveals significant weaknesses and limitations in the actual execution of these commitments. This situation raises concerns and calls for a comprehensive review of the implementation of the recommendations issued by the UPR mechanism.

The importance of the upcoming fourth review is underscored by significant developments in the state of human rights in United States, especially with the new U.S. administration assuming office on January 20, 2025. The practices adopted by the new administration, following its inauguration, have had a severe impact on human rights in the country, with serious violations of individual rights, as well as policy changes that directly affected fundamental freedoms and human rights in United States.

Through this report, Elizka Relief Foundation aims to highlight the ongoing and increasing violations, in addition to emphasizing the urgent need for accountability and verification of United States' commitments in the field of human rights, in accordance with international standards and United Nations agreements.

First: Cooperation with International Mechanisms and Other United Nations Bodies

During the third review of the UPR mechanism, United States received 63 recommendations concerning the ratification of fundamental human rights treaties, to which United States remains a non-party. Despite these recommendations, United States has not signed or ratified any new human rights treaties since then. United States continues to be a non-party to six of the fundamental human rights treaties and has not joined the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹

Additionally, United States received 30 recommendations regarding cooperation with UN mechanisms and bodies. Nevertheless, cooperation with these mechanisms has significantly declined following the arrival of the new U.S. administration in January 2025. On February 4, 2025, the current U.S. president signed an executive order for United States to withdraw from

¹ UN Treaty Body Database, USA, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx



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the Human Rights Council, a decision that has reduced interaction with key international mechanisms dedicated to the protection of human rights.

Furthermore, in January 2025, U.S.² president signed another executive order mandating the withdrawal of United States from the World Health Organization (WHO), a decision that had severe negative impacts on the right to health for many. On January 9, 2025, U.S. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly, with 243 votes in favor and 140 against, in support of the "Anti-Illegitimate Court Bill," referring to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Although the ICC is an international body tasked with prosecuting individuals accused of committing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, United States imposed severe sanctions against it on February 6, 2025. These sanctions included targeting the ICC's prosecutor and were primarily manifested in a travel ban on ICC officials and staff, as well as their family members, along with anyone who provided assistance in Court's investigations.

The sanctions also involved freezing the assets of these individuals within United States, in light of ICC's ruling that convicted the Israeli prime minister and his defense minister. Furthermore, United States canceled any funding allocated to the ICC, whether current or future.

Elizka Relief Foundation notes that these actions represent retaliatory measures against ICC members, including the prosecutor. Such policies significantly undermine the Court's ability to fulfill its essential tasks of prosecuting individuals responsible for major crimes that threaten international peace and security, thereby posing a threat to the effectiveness of international justice in the realm of human rights. These sanctions will also adversely affect the ICC's work in combating impunity for perpetrators of international crimes.

Additionally, U.S. president directed the Department of State to reassess cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),³ reflecting a shift in U.S. policy towards the United Nations in general. These policies and practices pose a real threat to human rights both domestically and internationally and could undermine international efforts to protect fundamental rights worldwide.

Second: Sanctions Imposed on the International Criminal Court

On January 9, 2025, U.S. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly with 243 votes in favor and 140 against the "Anti-Illegitimate Court Bill," referring to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Although the ICC is an international body tasked with prosecuting individuals accused of committing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, United States imposed severe sanctions against it on February 6, 2025. These sanctions targeted the ICC's prosecutor and were primarily reflected in a travel ban on ICC officials, staff, and related

² Withdrawing the United States from the world health organization, 20 January, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/4e3rynbe>

³ United States withdraws from the United Nations Human Rights Council. Arabi News, February 5, 2025. <https://arabic.news.cn/20250205/5c5d8870fabf4acb8df8df1de57e5840/c.html>



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personnel from entering United States, as well as restricting entry for their immediate family members and anyone who assisted in the Court's investigations.

The sanctions also included freezing the assets of these individuals in United States, stemming from the ICC's ruling that convicted the Israeli prime minister and his defense minister.⁴ Furthermore, United States canceled any funding allocated to the ICC, whether current or future.

Elizka Relief Foundation notes that these actions represent retaliatory measures against ICC members, including the prosecutor. Such policies significantly undermine the Court's ability to perform its core functions of prosecuting individuals responsible for major crimes that threaten international peace and security, thereby posing a threat to the effectiveness of international justice in the realm of human rights. These sanctions are also likely to adversely affect the ICC's efforts to combat impunity for perpetrators of international crimes.

Third: Establishment of National Human Rights Institution

In the third round of the Universal Periodic Review in 2020, United States received 9 recommendations concerning the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. These principles provide the international framework that specifies the standards which national institutions must meet to ensure their independence and effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights.

Despite United States agreeing to more than half of these recommendations,⁵ it has yet to establish an independent national human rights institution. Instead, United States relies on various bodies such as U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and civil rights offices within different departments, which focus on specific issues like racial discrimination, labor rights, and education.⁶ However, these bodies lack the general mandate and independent authority that national human rights institutions enjoy in other countries, which limits their ability to provide comprehensive and effective protections for human rights in the nation.

These fragmented and specialized bodies are incapable of addressing all human rights issues in an integrated manner. Consequently, the absence of an independent national institution hinders United States' efforts to promote and protect human rights in line with international standards.

Fourth: Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

⁴ US hits international court's top prosecutor with sanctions after Trump's order, Ap News, 14 February , 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/4k8ypkda>

⁵ Ibid, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>

⁶ The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, <https://www.usccr.gov/about/mission>



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1. **Right to Life, Security, and Personal Protection:** During the third round of the Universal Periodic Review, United States received 35 recommendations regarding the abolition of the death penalty. Although some recommendations were accepted, the year 2024 saw the execution of 21 death sentences by the end of October, representing an increase compared to 18 executions in 2023.⁷ In this context, U.S. Congress continued to reject federal legislation to prevent or suspend the death penalty for a specified period, which contradicts the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
2. **Freedom of Opinion, Expression, and Press Freedom:** In the third round of the UPR, United States received two recommendations related to freedom of opinion and expression. However, in the four years that followed, there was a significant decline in adherence to these recommendations, both in terms of policies and practices. Among the most notable violations were unjustified restrictions on media content, the narrowing of digital spaces, and threats against journalists and whistleblowers. In 2024, United States ranked 55th globally in the Press Freedom Index released by Reporters Without Borders, a drop of 10 places compared to 2023. Rights of social media bloggers have also been violated, with U.S. tech companies collaborating with federal entities to monitor content opposing U.S. administration, especially content related to the Palestinian issue.⁸ Additionally, students at U.S. universities faced repressive practices from local and federal authorities due to their participation in peaceful protests.⁹
3. **Right to Work and Fair and Favorable Working Conditions:** During the third round of the UPR, United States received 14 recommendations regarding the right to work, improving working conditions, and ensuring fair wages. While it accepted all recommendations except for two, recent years have witnessed a worsening of violations related to this right. This deterioration is particularly evident in light of the new administration's plans to reduce the number of federal employees, resulting in the termination of over 100,000 government workers.¹⁰ Violations related to precarious employment and the rights of migrant workers have also persisted.¹¹
4. **Right to Health:** During the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), United States of America received 28 recommendations related to the right to health. Although United States accepted all but one of these recommendations, Elizka Foundation expresses deep concern over the plans by U.S. Department of Health and Human

⁷ US sees rise in executions after years of decline, lemonade, 31 October, 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/5x9xypts>

⁸ US social media giants accused of bias over Israel's war on Gaza, aa, 11 February 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/bdw7j8iy>

⁹ USC's 'security risk' rationale to thwart peaceful protest is not justified, LA Times, 25 April, 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/34b73r29>

¹⁰ Trump poised to launch new round of layoffs despite setbacks in court, Reuters, 15 March, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/4en8rwt8>

¹¹ Fastest wage growth over the last four years among historically disadvantaged groups, EPI, 21 March, 2024, <https://www.epi.org/publication/swa-wages-2023/>



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Services, which include the dismissal of approximately 10,000 employees and the closure of key health agencies.¹² These measures threaten to reduce access to essential health services, especially for the most vulnerable groups, constituting a violation of the right to health. Furthermore, U.S. decision in 2025 to freeze foreign aid and halt funding for global health programs¹³—along with its withdrawal from the World Health Organization—will negatively impact efforts to combat infectious diseases and undermine international cooperation in the health sector.¹⁴

5. **Women's Rights:** During the third cycle of the UPR, United States received 71 recommendations related to women's rights, including enhancing political participation, achieving pay equity, combating gender-based violence, and ensuring access to reproductive health services. Despite accepting most of these recommendations, Elizka Foundation notes with concern that harmful cultural practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation remain legal in several U.S. states.¹⁵ Discrimination against women in United States continues to persist across various sectors such as wages, employment, and education, with women earning significantly less than men—posing a major obstacle to achieving true gender equality.¹⁶

Recommendations

1. Ratify international treaties that United States has not yet ratified, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to ensure the country's commitment to international standards for the protection of children's rights.
2. Reconsider the executive order suspending U.S. participation in the Human Rights Council and work toward resuming full cooperation with the Council.
3. Resume full cooperation with the World Health Organization following a reassessment of the withdrawal decision, to ensure effective responses to global health crises and contribute to strengthening the international health system.
4. Lift the sanctions imposed on the International Criminal Court and respect the Court's independence in fulfilling its judicial duties, contributing to the promotion of international justice.

¹² United States announces the layoff of 10,000 employees at the Department of Health and Human Services as part of a restructuring plan. Under the Microscope, March 28, 2025 <https://tinyurl.com/59veytv7>

¹³ Health and Human Services will lay off 10,000 workers and close agencies in a major restructuring, AP News, 28 March, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/3np9c487>

¹⁴ Withdrawal of the United States from the WHO — How President Trump Is Weakening Public Health, Nejm, 5 March, 2025, <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2501790>

¹⁵ Why Women's Rights Are Vulnerable in America, equality now, 8 March, 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/2w6c9frf>

¹⁶ Women's Rights Are Under Attack, APWU, <https://tinyurl.com/5pfhtwzr>



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5. Consider establishing an independent national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles to ensure effective and autonomous monitoring and promotion of human rights at the national level.
6. Take concrete steps toward abolishing the death penalty at both the federal and state levels, in line with previous international recommendations and human rights commitments.
7. Guarantee freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, and take the necessary measures to protect them, including halting the excessive use of force against peaceful protesters and enhancing the legal environment for the protection of civil and political rights.
8. Improve working conditions and ensure fair wages; halt the dismissal of federal employees, which negatively affects the delivery of public services; and ensure that wages are sufficient to meet workers' basic living needs.
9. Refinance and support national and international health programs, including reversing decisions to reduce funding for global health initiatives such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), to ensure continued support for countries in need.
10. Consider ensuring the continued provision of health assistance to developing countries, particularly in areas related to epidemic and infectious disease control, to support these countries in meeting health challenges.