

1. The Presbyterian Church (USA) submits this Stakeholder Report on the Universal Periodic Review for the United States of America (US) 4th Cycle. We highlight the following regarding the United States' (US) implementation of recommendations from its 2020 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and further highlight key topics for the US to address since its last review.

2. At this critical moment in the United States, the second term of President Trump that began less than three months ago, is causing significant upheaval in our society. He has signed numerous executive orders that threaten basic human rights for its citizens and dismantling democratic institutions responsible for upholding basic human rights for providing healthcare, housing, education, social security, civil rights, and attacking higher education institutions. The people most affected by these policies will be the most vulnerable and marginalized in our society whose voices have long been silenced.

3. US is undermining the international system by withdrawing from multilateral organizations and treaties such as the UN Human Rights Council, World Health Organization; UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, defund UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Paris Climate Agreement and the Agenda for 2030 Sustainable Development. US has also attacked the International Criminal Court (ICC) by imposing sanctions. Thus, seeking to undermine international rule of law-based system that aims to protect human rights for all people and which US has overwhelmingly maintained since the end of World War II when the United Nations was created.

Structural Racism and Discrimination

4. At the last UPR cycle, the US accepted recommendations to address systemic racial discrimination. However, it remains pervasive and greater effort is needed to address systemic racial discrimination in our society.

5. Racism is the continuing legacy of white supremacy. Through colonization and slavery, the United States of America helped to create and embrace a system of valuing and devaluing people based on skin color and ethnic identity. This system deliberately subjugated groups of people for the purpose of material, political, and social advantage.

6. "The US has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, with roughly 2 million people held in jails, prisons, and immigration detention facilities on any given day, and millions more on parole and probation. Racial disparities persist at every point of the criminal system, including police stops, searches, arrests, charging, and sentencing."¹

7. On death row, people of color but particularly Black individuals are overrepresented compared to their representation in the overall population. Of those executed in 2024, 36% were Black men even though they make up only about 13% of the US population.² Racial disparity when reviewing race of the victims and race of defendants executed provide a grim reality. Since the reinstatement of capital punishment in the United States in 1976, just 21 white people have been executed for killing a black person (less than 1.36 percent of all executions),

whereas the number of black people executed for killing a white person is 299 (making up nearly 19.4 percent of all executions).³

8. Criminalization of poverty. In 2024, the US Supreme Court held in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* that local governments can ticket, arrest, and even imprison homeless people for camping on public spaces. In Los Angeles, 38 percent of all arrests and citations by police were issued to homeless people who make up only 1% of the population.⁴ Black and indigenous people experience homelessness at significantly higher rates than White people, leading to a disproportionate representation of these groups within the homeless population.⁵

9. Racial disparities in access to healthcare gravely impact Black women. Black women face disproportionately higher rates of cervical cancer mortality compared to White women, often due to disparities in access to healthcare despite cervical cancer being preventable and curable if detected early. In 2022, maternal death rates were much higher for Black women (49.5 per 100,000) than White women (19 per 100,000). Preterm birth rates also remained higher for Black women than for other women.⁶

10. Reparations. Efforts to create a federal reparations study commission did not happen in 2025. However, several states and localities proposed measures to address historical injustices.⁷ As of December 2024, at least 40 localities have established reparations initiatives: seven states, four counties, and 30 city-level reparations task forces or commissions. The racial wealth gap is a stark reminder of manifestation of slavery's harms for Black people whereby the wealth of White households (\$250,400) is more than nine times as much as that of Black households (\$27,100).⁸ As with the nation, the church has had a complex history on slavery. However, in 2022 PCUSA established the Center for Repair of Historic Harms to engage in the work of repair within the denomination and works to inspire others to join in the effort to move towards reparation.

11. Recommendations:

- Review policies at federal, state and local levels with a view to preventing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;
- Work to prevent the execution of persons now under sentence of death and work to repeal laws where they exist;
- Reinstate civil rights offices and personnel at federal and state levels;
- Repeal laws that criminalize poverty;
- Direct resources to address the root causes of poverty, such as lack of affordable housing, employment opportunities, quality education and access to healthcare, inclusive of full access to sexual and reproductive health options;
- Restore funding for Health and Human Service's Maternal and Child Health programs that to improve maternal health outcomes for women of color, particularly Black women, and marginalized communities;

- Establish reparation commissions and develop initiatives to correct historical injustices due to the sin of slavery and against human rights.

Gender Identity – LGBTQIA+ Rights

12. During its last UPR cycle, the US committed to “fully implement laws” to prohibit discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. However, the US has enacted policies that increase anti-LGBT discrimination by dismantling DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) initiatives.⁹

13. Upon his reelection, President Trump quickly issued executive order disclaiming recognition of gender identity under federal law and instructed agencies to roll back key protections for transgender people such as restricting transgender individuals from serving in the US military; rolling back protections in healthcare, particularly concerning gender-affirming care; limiting participation in sports, transgender women in women’s sports, prohibiting access to women’s bathroom and locker rooms. He signed an executive order for federal agencies to recognize male and female, as defined by sex at birth, affecting the ability of transgender and non-binary people to obtain passports that accurately reflect their gender identity.¹⁰

14. Our affirmations and this commitment are rooted and grounded in our sacred texts, in the breadth of Scripture, and in the Reformed Tradition. Scripture affirms that all people are created in the image of God. The image of God expansively and specifically includes people of all gender identities including transgender, cisgender, gender non-binary people and people of all gender expressions.

15. Recommendations:

- Rescind the transgender military service ban and to serve military and every type of government and public service;
- Full access to public accommodation, including gender-inclusive restrooms;
- Protections for transgender students against violence and bullying;
- Repeal state bans on gender-affirming care, and adopt policies to ensure it is accessible;
- Provide legal protections for all persons who experience sexual and relationship abuse;
- Enact comprehensive state and federal legislation prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Democracy at Stake

16. Democracy and human rights are intrinsically linked; democracy provides the framework for protecting and promoting human rights, while human rights are essential for a just and functioning democracy. A democratic system, characterized by the right to participate in government through free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the protection of fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and association, is crucial for ensuring the protection

and promotion of human rights.

US Foreign Policy Priority

17. Biden administration's vision to promote human rights and democracy as the centerpiece of his foreign policy and thus strengthen the national interest of stability and democracy at home did not fare well under the weight of two wars and other conflicts around the world.

18. A military response has too often become the US's initial and default response to international conflicts. Doctrine of Discovery, along with slavery, was one of the US's original sins. Inherited from the Roman Catholic doctrine allowing for the lands to be claimed from unbaptized people for conversion, it became in practice a European Catholic or Protestant license to justify the use of force to conquer Native American peoples and take their land and resources with little or no compensation. A legacy from that has been the militarization of our nation's foreign policy—*might makes right*—and the military-industrial complex that has hard-wired militarization into our economy and political structure.¹¹

19. Policies that support undemocratic regimes, repress populations and enable religious or ethnic discrimination involve costly military aid that enables indefinite imprisonment without due process and torture of citizens and immigrants, exploit local weaknesses and compromise our country's values.¹²

20. US sends military aid to governments that are violating international laws. US-made Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) were used by the Israeli military. These air strikes were either direct attacks on civilians or civilian objects or indiscriminate attacks.¹³ US spending on Israel's military operations and related US operations in the region total at least \$22.76 billion from October 7, 2023 – September 30, 2024.¹⁴ The *might* has contributed to an extreme imbalance of power and hence an attitude of impunity among many in the Israeli government and military.¹⁵

20. US has refused to apply the Leahy Law to Israel even though the Law specifically states that principal goal of United States security sector assistance is to promote the transparent and accountable oversight of security forces, rule of law and respect for human rights.¹⁶

23. The privileged alliances with the militaries of other nations may weaken civilian democracy in those nations and here at home, and that one people's stability should never be sustained by another people's subjugation.¹⁷ Militarization robs US citizens of economic resources, leads to corrupt political system, restrict fundamental human rights and due process, and compromises our moral values by desensitizing and dehumanizing people to the sufferings of civilians under attack.

Protection of Political Rights

25. The right to free and fair elections has been eroding in the US. In June 2025, Supreme Court held in *Trump v. United States* that President Donald Trump could not be criminally indicted for at least some of his actions trying to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. It also

established a broad scope of presidential immunity for “official acts” while in office, a decision with potentially devastating consequences for democracy and human rights if interpreted to give presidents an absolute shield from prosecution for illegal attempts to overturn election results, serious human rights abuses, or comparably egregious misconduct.¹⁸

26. In May 2024, the Supreme Court upheld a redistricting map drawn by the South Carolina legislature, a map that a lower court found had resulted in “the bleaching of African American voters” dismissing the voices of Black voters challenging gerrymandering.¹⁹

Protection of Civil Rights, Due Process, Freedom of Expression and Assembly

30. The National Report in 2020 stated, “The rights to speak, publish, associate, and petition for a redress of grievances could not be protected if the government could punish individuals because of differences of opinion, or if government could prohibit speech on the basis of its content or the speaker’s viewpoint.”²⁰

31. However, we have seen just that in recent weeks as the government has aggressively targeted individuals for the content of their protests and threatening them with deportation. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducted arrests and detention of peaceful protesters in violation of their human rights regardless of immigration status in the high profile cases of Mahmoud Khalil²¹ and Rumeysa Ozturk.²²

31. We affirm the rights of all citizens to freedom of expression and assembly are fundamental rights vital to a flourishing democracy. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) opposes any attempts to abrogate this freedom, including, but not limited to, attempts to criminalize, manipulate by false information, or in other ways delegitimize peaceful protest.²³

32. By withdrawing from multilateral bodies and treaties that aim to protect the rights for all people, US is dismantling the international order it overwhelmingly championed since the end of World War II. Its financial contribution to the UN is a small percentage. “In 2022, total US support for the UN amounted to \$18 billion that is equivalent to 2 percent of the \$820 billion the United States spends annually on its military, and about half of what Americans spend each year on ice cream.”²⁴

33. Recommendations:

- Affirm the effectiveness of nonmilitary, collaborative international approaches to resolving conflict by seeking political and diplomatic solutions;
- Withhold US military aid from states in violation of international humanitarian and human rights laws and conditional on recognizing basic human rights and citizenship rights;
- Apply the Leahy Laws without exceptions;
- Reaffirm that human rights standards are vital to our national identity and purpose and that long-term security cannot be obtained by military means;

- Include in the US State Department’s Annual Human Rights report rights of women, the disabled, and the LGBTQ+ community;
- Ensure due process of immigrants and end expedited removal;
- Ensure that rights to free speech and peaceful assembly are respected and refrain from the use of force and lethal weapons when dealing with protests;
- Urge the US to rejoin multilateral organizations and treaties;
- Withdraw measures against ICC, lift sanctions against staff undermining ICC’s essential mandate, and ratify the Rome Statute;
- Establish nonmilitary and international collaborative approaches of peacemaking and peacebuilding and strengthen support for the work of the United Nations.

We still believe that the US can serve as a model to other states and we encourage the government to consider these recommendations seriously.

¹ Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/united-states>

² Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_executed_in_the_United_States_in_2024

³ Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_white_defendants_executed_for_killing_a_black_victim

⁴ Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/united-states>

⁵ National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/resources/sharable-graphics/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/>

⁶ Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/united-states>

⁷ Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/blog/reparations-in-2025>

⁸ NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/reparations-bill-hr40-returns-congress-trump-dei-government-rcna191564>

⁹ France24.com. <https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20250122-trump-orders-end-of-government-dei-programs-lgbt-protections>

¹⁰ 19thnews. <https://19thnews.org/2025/03/trump-anti-trans-executive-orders/>

¹¹ On Affirming the Effectiveness of Nonmilitary, Collaborative International Approaches to Resolving Conflict. <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000767>

¹² For Human Rights and Civic Freedom: Movements for Democratic Change in the Arab World—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. (220th GA, 2012) <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3987>

¹³ Amnesty International Report: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/12/israel-opt-us-made-munitions-killed-43-civilians-in-two-documented-israeli-air-strikes-in-gaza-new-investigation/>

¹⁴ <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2024/USspendingIsrael>

¹⁵ “Study Guide for Israel-Palestine: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace” <https://pcusa.org/resource/study-guide-israel-palestine-human-values-absence-just-peace>

¹⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/2/how-us-violates-its-own-leahy-law-to-ensure-military-support-for-israel>

¹⁷ [14-03] For Human Rights and Civic Freedom: Movements for Democratic Change in the Arab World—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3987>

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/united-states>

¹⁹ NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/23/g-s1-292/supreme-court-south-carolina-gerrymandering-case>

²⁰ Report of the United States of America to the UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/WG.6/36/USA/1 (2020) <https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2020/11/US-report-on-UPR-13-Aug-2020.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2025), para. 23.

²¹ NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/mahmoud-khalil-columbia-ice-deportation-rcna199814>

²² APNews. <https://apnews.com/article/rumeysa-ozturk-deportation-tufts-massachusetts-student-1dd330bef8fb44b05f9818c0020728a0>

²³ A Resolution on Honest Patriotism—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (224th GA, 2018) <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000402>

²⁴ The Death of the World America Made. <https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2025/02/trump-executive-order-treaties-organizations?lang=en>