



International Alliance for Peace and Development

Report submitted by the International Alliance for Peace and Development to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism concerning The United States of America

April 2026

The International Alliance for Peace and Development (IAPD) submits this report ahead of the possible review of the United States of America in the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The United States abstained from participating in the review scheduled for November 2025 and did not submit its national report. This position marks a retreat from U.S. engagement with international mechanisms, in particular the UPR, which by its nature is a cooperative mechanism. This withdrawal could make the United States the first United Nations Member State not to submit a report under the UPR since the mechanism's inception. The implications are not limited to procedural matters; this sets a precedent that could provide an excuse for some States, especially those repeatedly criticized for their human rights records, to take similar steps that would weaken the UPR's universal character and the principle of equal participation that underpins it.

This report aims to assess the extent to which the United States has implemented the recommendations it accepted during the third cycle, focusing on a number of specific issues and matters on which recommendations were made during that review.

1. Ratification and Accession to International Instruments

During the November 2020 review, the United States received 63 recommendations concerning ratification of core human rights treaties, none of which have been ratified to date. The United States fully accepted approximately 43 of those recommendations, yet had not ratified any of the referenced treaties at the time of drafting this report. To date, the United States has not signed or ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, nor the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It has also not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it the only United Nations Member State that has not ratified that Convention, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Overall, the United States remains non-party to six core human rights treaties, equivalent to 66% of these core treaties and conventions. It is also not a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, nor to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.¹

2. Cooperation with United Nations Mechanisms and Bodies

¹ UN Treaty Body Database, USA, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=179&Lang=EN

The IAPD notes a clear decline in cooperation between the United States and United Nations mechanisms and bodies. For example, in 2024, the United States was the Member State that received the most communications from Special Procedures, 73 in total, but responded to only 22 of them, representing 30.1% of the communications addressed to the State. Since January 2025, and despite the United States having received 30 recommendations in the third UPR encouraging it to expand cooperation with those mechanisms and bodies, the current U.S. administration has issued several executive actions that significantly reduced cooperation between the U.S. government and the United Nations.² In January 2025, the President signed an executive order withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization. In February 2025, another executive order was signed, withdrawing the United States from the Human Rights Council. The United States also halted funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and asked the U.S. Department of State to reassess the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).³ On 22 July 2025, the State Department officially announced the United States' withdrawal from UNESCO.

The United States also imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court on 6 February 2025. The ICC is an international body mandated to investigate and prosecute individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The sanctions were imposed in response to the Court's conviction of the Israeli Prime Minister and his former Defense Minister in relation to Israel's war on the Gaza Strip. The measures included a ban on ICC officials, staff, and agents, as well as their closest family members and anyone who assisted ICC investigations, from entering the United States, and the freezing of the U.S.-based assets of all those individuals.⁴ On 7 January 2026, the U.S. President signed a memorandum providing for the withdrawal of the United States from 66 international organizations, including 31 United Nations-affiliated bodies. That list includes entities related to peacebuilding, climate change, and the promotion of democracy, underscoring that the U.S. non-cooperation policy is not limited to a small number of human-rights bodies and mechanisms but has extended across a broad range of international cooperation.⁵

3. Establishment of a National Human Rights Institution

During the third UPR, the United States received nine recommendations to establish an independent national human rights institution (NHRI) in conformity with the Paris Principles, the international framework that sets standards for such institutions to ensure independence and effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights. Although the United States fully accepted five of those recommendations,⁶ it still does not have an independent NHRI. Instead, it relies on agencies that focus on specific issues such as racial discrimination, labor rights, and education. These agencies lack the broad mandate and independent powers characteristic of NHRIs in other countries.⁷ Many of these bodies have been further weakened since the second term of the current U.S. administration,

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

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

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

⁵ The United States withdraws from 66 international organizations under Trump's order, Arab News, January 8, 2026, <https://arabic.news.cn/20260108/6061d29d97e248d397cb48e656619432/c.html>

⁶ Ibid, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>

⁷ A national human rights institution for the United States: Can cities lead the way?, Open Global Rights, 27 May, 2025, <https://www.openglobalrights.org/a-national-human-rights-institution-for-the-united-states-can-cities-lead-the-way/>

rendering them unable even to exercise their existing mandates effectively.

4. Equality and Non-Discrimination

In the November 2020 third UPR, the United States received 61 recommendations relating to equality and non-discrimination. It fully accepted 60 of those recommendations and rejected only one. Despite this broad formal acceptance, institutional and social discrimination persists across many areas of life. Workplace and employment discrimination remain widespread. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has documented a range of lawsuits and complaints alleging racial and religious discrimination in hiring and institutional practices, indicating ongoing harms suffered by diverse groups. For example, on 10 January 2024, the EEOC filed a lawsuit accusing three employers of racial discrimination in hiring against Black employees; the EEOC has brought a number of other cases involving similar abuses affecting other groups.⁸

5. Freedom of Opinion, Expression, and Freedom of the Press

In the third UPR, the United States received two recommendations on freedom of opinion and expression, which it fully accepted.⁹ The IAPD nevertheless notes a marked decline in adherence to those recommendations in both policy and practice, including the imposition of unjustified restrictions on media content, narrowing of digital spaces, and threats to journalists and whistleblowers. In 2024, the United States ranked 55th in the World Press Freedom Index, a drop of 10 places from its 2023 position; in 2025, it ranked 57th globally. Media organizations experienced large waves of staff layoffs in 2023, a trend that continued into 2024, affecting local and international news outlets alike. More than 3,000 jobs were lost in the media sector in 2023 alone, the highest annual total since 2020.

The IAPD also has concerns about restrictions on freedom of expression at U.S. universities. Between October 2023 and March 2025, a number of arbitrary and repressive measures were taken against students participating in peaceful demonstrations protesting the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. Students at several universities, most notably New York University, organized sit-ins and marches on campus to express solidarity with civilians in Gaza and to oppose their government's foreign policies. Some university administrations and local and federal authorities responded to these protests with heavy-handed and disproportionate measures, including calling in police, arresting dozens of students, imposing disciplinary sanctions up to temporary or permanent suspension, and freezing student-club memberships. These measures were accompanied by smear campaigns and threats to students' academic and professional futures, which constitute a clear violation of the right to peaceful expression and freedom of assembly.¹⁰

Since taking office in January 2025, the current U.S. administration has also engaged in broad violations of press and media freedoms, including restrictions on access to information.¹¹ In March 2025, the Department of Defense issued directives to accredited journalists instructing them not to

⁸ EEOC Sues Three Employers for Race Discrimination, 10 January 2024, <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-three-employers-race-discrimination>

⁹ Ibid, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>

¹⁰ USC's 'security risk' rationale to thwart peaceful protest is not justified, LA Times, 25 April, 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/34b73r29>

¹¹ Democracy dies in broad daylight: the Trump administration's frontal assault on the free press, The Conversation, 11 February, 2026, <https://theconversation.com/democracy-dies-in-broad-daylight-the-trump-administrations-frontal-assault-on-the-free-press-275629>

seek or publish certain information without its explicit permission and threatened to revoke their credentials.¹²

6. Right to Health

During the third UPR, the United States received 28 recommendations related to the right to health, and it announced acceptance of all but one of those recommendations. Despite this broad acceptance, the IAPD is concerned about some policies and measures that may negatively affect the realization of this right, particularly the plans announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in March 2025 to lay off approximately 10,000 staff as part of a healthcare-sector restructuring. Those plans also include the closure of several specialized health agencies and programs, including entities responsible for substance-use treatment services and community health centers across the United States. This could reduce the availability of health services, especially for the most vulnerable populations in need of care, and raises concerns about the compatibility of these measures with the United States' international obligations to ensure the right to health and to provide services on an adequate and equitable basis.¹³

The current U.S. administration has taken a number of measures that have had serious impacts on the realization of the right to health, both domestically and internationally. In January 2025, the President announced a comprehensive 90-day freeze on all U.S. foreign assistance, including funding for global health programs. This was followed in February 2025 by a decision to halt U.S. funding to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). These steps posed a direct threat to the continuity of vital health programs relied upon by millions of patients, particularly in developing countries that depend heavily on U.S. funding for medicines and treatment services. The IAPD reviewed a study on HIV, which warned that reductions in U.S. funding could result in as many as 500,000 deaths in South Africa over the next decade and nearly half a million new infections, raising grave concerns about the humanitarian and health consequences of these policies for the most vulnerable populations in many countries worldwide.¹⁴

Recommendations

The IAPD recommends that the United States of America:

- Commit to regular and transparent participation in the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, including submitting its national report on time, to strengthen the credibility of its international commitments and its role as a responsible Member State in UN human rights bodies and mechanisms.
- Join and ratify the core human rights treaties to which it is not yet a party, to ensure fulfilment of its international obligations and to strengthen protection of human rights.
- Resume full cooperation with United Nations mechanisms and bodies, including the Human Rights Council and the World Health Organization, to ensure compliance with international standards and protection of human rights.

¹² Federal judge reverses Pentagon press restrictions, <https://shorturl.at/0bC9D>

¹³ The United States announces the layoff of 10,000 employees in the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the restructuring plan, In Focus, March 28, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/59yeytv7>

¹⁴ Trump administration ends funding for UN program fighting HIV/Aids, The Guardian, 27 Feb 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/3jbf6ymy>

- Cease sanctions and measures targeting the International Criminal Court and other international organizations and their officials.
- Establish an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles, with independence and a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights at the national level.
- Ensure protection for freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of the press, including removing unjustified restrictions on media content and expanding access to information for journalists and media organizations.
- Stop any retaliatory or punitive measures against journalists and students participating in peaceful protests, and guarantee their right to peaceful assembly and expression without threat or harassment.
- Ensure continued provision of essential health services domestically and internationally, including preserving health personnel, agencies, and critical international programs, with full adherence to the right to health under international standards and protection for the most vulnerable.