



# ELIZKA RELIEF FOUNDATION

## **Report Submitted by Elizka Relief Foundation to The UPR mechanism concerning the United States of America**

Elizka Relief Foundation submits this report prior to the possible review of the United States of America in the framework of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The preparation of this report takes place within the developments surrounding the United States' participation in this mechanism, particularly in light of its non-participation in the review scheduled for November 2025 and its failure to submit its national report by the set deadline, which drew various criticisms from human rights organizations regarding the extent to which the United States continues to engage with international accountability mechanisms. The United States had undergone three previous cycles of the UPR: in November 2010, then in May 2015, and, finally, in November 2020.

This report aims to assess the level of the United States' compliance with the recommendations it accepted during the third UPR review in 2020. It does so by analyzing legislative developments, public policies, and executive measures, in addition to monitoring progress in certain areas against the persistence of challenges or regression in other areas, thereby supporting the assessment of the United States' compliance with its human rights obligations at both the national and international levels.

### **First: Cooperation with UN Bodies and Mechanisms**

During the third Universal Periodic Review in 2020, the United States received approximately 30 recommendations calling on it to strengthen its cooperation with United Nations bodies and mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, Special Procedures, and specialized agencies under the international organization. Although the United States indicated its willingness to continue cooperation with these mechanisms,<sup>1</sup> subsequent years witnessed notable shifts in the level of this cooperation, especially since the beginning of 2025, when the U.S. Administration adopted a number of political and executive decisions that directly affected the nature of the relationship with certain UN institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>



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In January 2025, the U.S. Administration announced a decision to withdraw from the World Health Organization. This decision was followed by critical reactions from the international community, given the Organization's pivotal role in coordinating global efforts in the field of public health.<sup>2</sup> In February 2025, it also announced its withdrawal from the Human Rights Council, representing a step back from its previous participation in the Council's work and its various mechanisms, including the UPR. In the same context, the United States halted its funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), one of the largest international organizations providing humanitarian services to Palestinian refugees in the region.<sup>3</sup> These shifts also included a reassessment of the relationship with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Specifically, the U.S. Administration instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct a comprehensive review of the United States' participation in the Organization, prior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' announcement on 22 July 2025 of the United States' formal withdrawal from UNESCO. These steps reflect a broader trend toward re-evaluating the United States' engagement in a number of multilateral institutions.

Subsequently, on 7 January 2026, a presidential memorandum was issued containing guidance to review or terminate participation in a large number of international organizations. The list included nearly 66 international organizations, among them 31 entities associated with the United Nations system. This step was taken within the framework of a comprehensive review of international engagement policies.<sup>4</sup> In light of these developments, Elizka notes that progress in implementing recommendations related to strengthening cooperation with UN bodies and mechanisms remains limited. Moreover, some indicators suggest a decline in the levels of institutional engagement with several of these mechanisms. This may affect the effectiveness of international dialogue on human rights issues, as well as the role that the United States can play in supporting the international protection system in this field.

## Second: Establishment of a National Human Rights Institution

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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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>.



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During the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review held in November 2020, the United States of America received 9 recommendations calling for the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles adopted by the United Nations. These principles set the international standards governing the work of national human rights institutions, including ensuring institutional and financial independence, as well as a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, the capacity to monitor policies and legislation, to receive complaints, and to engage with UN human rights mechanisms. The United States accepted 5 of these recommendations with full acceptance, reflecting an initial recognition of the importance of having an independent national institution to carry out these functions.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this, follow-up up to the time of preparing this report indicates that no concrete steps have been taken toward establishing a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. The institutional framework for human rights in the United States therefore still lacks an internationally accredited independent national human rights institution within the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). Accordingly, the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles remains one of the areas in which no tangible progress has been made since the 2020 review. This, in turn, limits the development of a national institutional structure capable of strengthening independent oversight of human rights conditions within the United States, and of supporting systematic cooperation with the relevant United Nations mechanisms in this field.<sup>6</sup>

## Third: The Right to Life

During the third Universal Periodic Review, held in November 2020, the United States received a total of 72 recommendations related to the right to life. Of these, 35 recommendations called for steps to reduce the use of the death penalty or to abolish it entirely.<sup>7</sup> Although the United States accepted most of these recommendations, subsequent developments indicate the continued application of the death penalty at the federal level and in a number of states. According to data

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

<sup>6</sup> Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, <https://ganhri.org/membership/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>



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issued by organizations monitoring the death penalty and U.S. judicial records, in 2025, 47 prisoners were executed in 11 U.S. states. This reflects the continued recourse to this punishment within the U.S. criminal justice system despite the growing international calls for its abolition or for an optional moratorium on its implementation.<sup>8</sup> Incidents involving the use of lethal force by law enforcement authorities in the United States also raise continuing concerns about violations of the right to life. In January 2026, Ms. "R.N" was killed after a member of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency opened fire on her while she was inside her vehicle in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This occurred during a security operation in a residential street. Video footage of the incident shows that multiple shots were fired toward the vehicle as it attempted to move, which led Ms. "R.N" to lose control of the car and ultimately her death. Protests erupted in the city and in a number of other U.S. cities following the incident, reflecting ongoing concerns regarding the use of lethal force by law enforcement authorities in the United States and the potential human rights violations that may result, including violations of the right to life.<sup>9</sup>

Arms transfer and military aid policies pursued by the United States to certain countries also raise increasing concerns regarding their consequences for the protection of the right to life in areas of armed conflict. Following the military escalation witnessed in the Middle East since October 2023, the United States continued to provide extensive military support to Israel, including large supplies of weapons and ammunition used in military operations that resulted in high numbers of civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The effects of these military operations also extended to areas in Lebanon and Syria. The current U.S. Administration, since taking office in January 2025, has continued approving new arms deals with Israel. In January 2026, the U.S. government approved a new package of arms sales to Israel valued at approximately USD 6.7 billion. This package included advanced military equipment, including Apache attack helicopters, tactical military vehicles, and military equipment associated with combat operations. Such developments increase the risks faced by civilians in operational areas, most notably

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<sup>8</sup> Execution List 2025, Death Penalty Info, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/executions/2025>

<sup>9</sup> Protests and arrests in the American city of Minneapolis after a woman was killed by an officer from the Immigration Department, BBC, January 8, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/cpqy2j17911o>



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violations of the right to life.<sup>10</sup>

## **Fourth: The Right to Work**

During the third Universal Periodic Review, the United States received 14 recommendations related to the right to work. It announced full acceptance of 12 recommendations, partial acceptance of one recommendation, and rejection of one recommendation in full.<sup>11</sup> Despite this acceptance, facts indicate a lack of actual compliance with many of these recommendations. This is reflected in the persistence of challenges and violations related to the right to work, most notably the increased reliance on the informal economy and low-wage jobs that lack adequate job security. This weakens decent work conditions and adversely affects workers' living stability. According to research reviewed by Elizka, workers earning low wages constitute a large proportion of the workforce. One quarter of these workers live on an income that does not exceed USD 35,000 per year. Most of them work in temporary or otherwise unstable jobs. Meanwhile, around 40% of them must provide childcare within the home, which increases economic pressures on them. The situation becomes even more difficult as opportunities for stable employment decline and as the proportion of workers who resort to irregular forms of work to support their livelihoods increases.<sup>12</sup>

The United States has adopted policies and measures that weaken the protection of workers in the federal labor market and adversely affect their right to decent work. In 2025, the U.S. President issued a new executive order and administrative rules under which tens of thousands of federal employees would be reclassified, making it easier to terminate them without adequate legal protection. On 4 March 2026, a group of federal unions filed a lawsuit in a federal court in the state of Maryland against the President of the United States and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, arguing that the executive order, which created a new category of federal employees estimated at approximately 50,000 employees, makes it easier to dismiss workers at

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<sup>10</sup> US approves major new arms sales to Israel worth \$6.67 billion and to Saudi Arabia worth \$9 billion, AP News, 31 January, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-arms-sale-trump-iran-tensions-e73d1fe40974abca838a1a08590934d3>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>

<sup>12</sup> Employment Stability and Security of Low-Wage Workers in the United States, Center for Social Development, 7 January, 2026, <https://csd.wustl.edu/26-01/>



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will without the traditional procedures that protect them.<sup>13</sup>

## **Fifth: Rights of Migrants**

During the third Universal Periodic Review, the United States received a total of 49 recommendations concerning the protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers. It announced full acceptance of 47 of these recommendations, while rejecting two. This reflected an announced commitment to improving policies related to migration management and to ensuring respect for migrants' rights, including guaranteeing due process, improving conditions of immigration-related detention, and strengthening protection for asylum seekers and groups most at risk. However, follow-up developments indicate growing concerns regarding the conditions of migrants, in light of the current U.S. Administration adopting a set of policies and procedures that have led to a notable tightening of the enforcement of immigration laws and the restriction of certain pathways for humanitarian protection.<sup>14</sup>

In this context, Elizka noted that the U.S. Administration has taken measures that expand the use of detention in the management of immigration-related matters. In August 2025, U.S. authorities announced plans to create large detention facilities for migrants within military bases and other locations in the United States. These plans included establishing a large detention center at Fort Bliss military base in the state of Texas, with a capacity that could reach approximately 5,000 detainees. This falls within a policy aimed at increasing the authorities' capacity to detain migrants while their cases are being considered or before deportation procedures are carried out.<sup>15</sup> The expansion of detention in this manner raises growing concerns: intensive reliance on migrant detention, especially in large facilities or military locations, may undermine a number of essential safeguards, including the right to personal liberty and due process. It also poses risks related to detention conditions for long periods without final judicial rulings. This may negatively affect the protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers and increase the likelihood of violations related to ill-treatment or unjustified restrictions on their liberty.

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<sup>13</sup> Unions sue over Trump's efforts to nix federal worker job protections, Reuters, 4 March 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/unions-sue-over-trumps-efforts-nix-federal-worker-job-protections-2026-03-04/>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>

<sup>15</sup> administration plans to build largest US federal migrant detention center on military base, Reuters, 7 August, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/trump-administration-plans-build-largest-us-federal-migrant-detention-center-2025-08-07>



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## **Elizka recommends that the United States do the following:**

- Reconsider the arbitrary decisions taken by the U.S. Administration to withdraw from United Nations bodies.
- Accelerate the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles, with institutional and financial independence and a broad mandate, in order to strengthen and protect human rights at the national level.
- Reduce the use of the death penalty or abolish it entirely at the federal level and in the states, to enhance protection of the right to life.
- Review policies on the use of force by law enforcement authorities and ensure accountability for violations in order to protect the right to life.
- Restrict the transfer of arms and military assistance to countries whose use may result in violations of the right to life of civilians, and strengthen oversight over such use.
- Strengthen protection of the right to work by providing stable jobs with adequate wages and appropriate job security, while reviewing procedures that facilitate the dismissal of employees without legal protection.
- Protect the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, including by limiting prolonged detention in large or military facilities and ensuring respect for due process, with the provision of a safe environment for migrants.