

U.S. Strongly Criticized at United Nations for Human Rights Violations



Geneva, May 14 (RHC)-- The United States has been sharply criticized over its human rights record by numerous countries at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Member nations blasted the U.S. at the United Nations' Human Rights Council, rebuking the country over police brutality, racial injustice, detention of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay and the continued use of the death penalty.

During the second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States, country after country urged the U.S. to strengthen legislation and expand training to eliminate racism and excessive use of force by law enforcement officers.

The UN's UPR periodically examines the human rights performance of all 193 UN member states. The U.S. faced its first review in 2010, when member states presented the delegation with 240 recommendations. However, the U.S. has failed to act on many of those recommendations, according to Human Rights Watch.

"I'm not surprised that the world's eyes are focused on police issues in the U.S.," said Alba Morales, who investigates the US criminal justice system at Human Rights Watch. "There is an international spotlight

that's been shone [on the issues], in large part due to the events in Ferguson and the disproportionate police response to even peaceful protesters," she said.

UN member states also called on the Barack Obama administration to close the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to stop the use of the death penalty, provide adequate protections for migrant workers and protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Among the other concerns raised by UN member states over U.S. human rights violations was the continued use of child labor, human trafficking and sexual violence against Native American women.

Pakistan Ambassador to the UN Zamir Akram told the council that his country has "serious concerns about the human rights situation in the U.S." Akram made eight recommendations to the U.S. delegation, including to bring the use of American drones in line with international norms and to compensate innocent victims of drone strikes with money.

He also said the U.S. should end police brutality against African-Americans, end illegal detentions at Guantánamo Bay and prosecute people involved in a CIA torture program that began after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

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