



HUMAN RIGHTS *in the* UNITED STATES

*Writing
America's
Universal
Periodic Review*





“Like any other member state in the United Nations, the United States must be committed to full transparency; the UPR process provides the space for civil society to formally engage with the government around human rights challenges...We welcome the Obama Administration to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast with a spirit of cooperation, transparency and accountability.”

- Adren Wilson, National Director
Equity and Inclusion Campaign
New Orleans Consultation, January 27, 2010



About the UPR

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was established by the UN General Assembly in 2006 as a process through which the human rights records of the United Nations' 192 Member States could be reviewed and assessed. This review, conducted through the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), is based upon human rights obligations and commitments expressed in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights instruments to which the State is party, and elsewhere. The UPR process provides a unique avenue for the global community to discuss human rights around the world.

Individual countries are slated for review every four years. UPR sessions take place at the HRC in Geneva, and are framed by reports submitted by national governments. This will be the first UPR for the United States.

Preparation of the UPR report required the support and assistance of the White House and 13 federal agencies: the Departments of State, Justice, Defense, Homeland Security, Interior, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Agriculture (including U.S. Forest Service), Treasury, and Health and Human Services; as well as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.



In November 2010, the United States will present its first national report under the Universal Periodic Review before the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.



Nafeh AbuNab

Constituents ask questions of the U.S. delegation at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

The United States has long been among the world's outspoken voices in support and defense of universal human rights. Our commitment to human rights abroad is matched by an equally strong commitment to human rights at home, a pledge that dates back to our nation's founding and our treasured Constitution and Bill of Rights. In producing and presenting a report as part of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, we demonstrate that the values we promote abroad are those we champion at home.

There is much in the report for which we can be proud. At the same time, we have challenges to overcome and problems that are not yet solved. We must continue our efforts toward a future envisioned by Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President John F. Kennedy, and many others who have propelled the United States toward an ever-greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The U.S. UPR report, produced after extensive meetings and visits across the country and with a wide range of contributing voices, underscores important truths about the United States. It also reflects

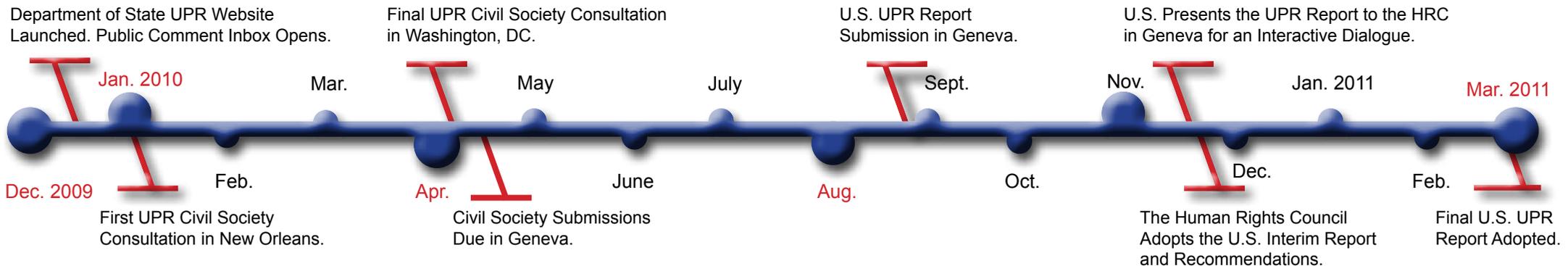
our determination to strengthen international mechanisms designed to protect and promote human rights through our active participation and engagement in those mechanisms.

Over the course of a year, a team of women and men from the U.S. Departments of State and Justice, in partnership with other U.S. government agencies, crisscrossed the United States to hear from our citizens about the human rights issues that affect their daily lives. We held meetings from Window Rock, Arizona to New Orleans, Louisiana and beyond. We met with non-governmental organizations, tribal and community groups, and individuals to hear their concerns, learn of their ideas, and listen to their stories. We launched a public website to invite ideas and input from all Americans. The accounts collected during this nationwide effort form the foundation of this report. The process was undertaken in the best American democratic spirit: open, consultative, with pride in our achievements, recognition of our weaknesses, and above all, a willingness to recognize the challenges before us.

Our approximately 20-page report to the UN Human Rights Council could not and does not cover everything; many important issues and points were undoubtedly left out. It does, however, reveal the abiding commitment of the United States government to demonstrate leadership in international engagement and on human rights, and to exhibit transparency regarding our challenges.

"The civil rights community came together to address the most important social issues confronting Detroit. Federal officials stated that the program would be useful not only in preparing the report to the United Nations, but also in helping shape federal civil rights enforcement policy more broadly."

Peter Hammer, Director
Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights
Detroit Consultation, April 7, 2010



Excerpts from the Civil Society Consultations

Our conversations covered a range of issues as diverse as our nation itself. Full summaries of our extensive consultations with civil society are available on the State Department's UPR page.

During these sessions, representatives from many different Native American tribes and other interested individuals discussed issues affecting their communities, including self-government, housing, jobs, health, and law enforcement.

A number also called upon the U.S. Government to endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The first speaker discussed his personal experience with homelessness, stating that Birmingham has over 600 chronically homeless people and a limited shelter capacity. He called for permanent supportive housing and services for people suffering from physical and mental illness.



Participants expressed concern about the effects of increased border enforcement, bonded labor and labor trafficking, the high number of migrants found dead in the border area every year, and the perceived "militarization" of the border.

One central theme was the intersection between race and criminal justice. The panelists asserted that although these problems existed in this area before Hurricane Katrina, the storm exposed and exacerbated them.

America's Commitment to Human Rights at Home and Abroad

“In word and deed, the United States is a leader in protecting the fundamental dignity of all people, including our own. We are proud to participate in the Universal Periodic Review as one more demonstration of the importance the United States places on both protecting the basic human rights of Americans and promoting those same rights for every person, everywhere.”

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State



For More Information

The Department of State created a website to provide information about the UPR Process and details about public events, and to solicit ideas and input from Americans. Visitors can access the report itself, summaries of our UPR civil society consultations, and learn more about the UPR Process.

The Department of State's Universal Periodic Review website:
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/upr/index.htm>

General information about the United States at the Human Rights Council can be found on the U.S. Mission in Geneva's homepage:
<http://geneva.usmission.gov>

For additional information, including details on the reviews of other countries, please visit the UPR webpage of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR>