



The Human Rights Record of the United States in 2006 - Full Text

Source: Human Rights in the US

Following is the full text of "The Human Rights Record of the United States in 2006" published by The Information Office of the State Council on Thursday:

On March 6, the U.S. Department of State released its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006. As in previous years, the State Department pointed the finger at human rights conditions in more than 190 countries and regions, including China, but avoided touching on the human rights situation in the United States. To help the world people have a better understanding of the situation in the United States and promote the international cause of human rights, we hereby publish the Human Rights Record of the United States in 2006.

*** I. On Life, Property and Security of Person**

The life, property and personal security of people of the United States are affected by rampant violent crimes.

The U.S. Justice Department reported on Sept. 10, 2006 that there were 5.2 million violent crimes in the United States in 2005, up 2.5 percent from the previous year, the highest rate in 15 years. Statistics released by the U.S. Justice Department in 2006 showed that in 2005 American residents age 12 or above experienced 23 million crimes; for every 1,000 persons age 12 or older, there occurred 1 rape or sexual assault, 1 assault with injury, and 3 robberies. (Bureau of Justice Statistics Criminal Victimization, in: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.) Murder, robbery and other violent crimes reported in the United States jumped 3.7 percent in the first half of 2006 over the same period in 2005, with robbery alone up by a startling 9.7 percent. Murders that occurred in cities with population of between 500,000 and 1 million in the same period were up by 8.4 percent year on year. (FBI: Violent Crimes up in 1st Half of '06. MSNBC.com, December 19, 2006. in: <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/11497293>.) In the first half of 2006 murder was up a whopping 27.5 percent in Boston. In Memphis murder increased 43 percent in 2006. In Cincinnati murder was up 19 percent in the first six months of 2006. Robbery increases for the first half of 2006 across the United States were stunning: Rochester, N.Y., up 47 percent; suburban Montgomery County, Md., up 37 percent; Minneapolis up 36.8 percent. (Startling New Stats Show Cross-Country Crime Spike. ABC News, October 12, 2006.) From January 1 to Dec. 10, there were 384 slayings in Philadelphia, and the number exceeded the total toll of victims in 2005. (City Effort Needs to Grow. Editorial, Philadelphia Inquirer, December 12, 2006.) During the first 11 months in 2006, 147 murders were reported in New Orleans. That means the new Orleanians were murdering each other at a rate of 73.5 murders per 100,000 residents, exceeding that of the nation's most murderous city Compton, California, whose rate was 67 murders per 100,000 people in 2005. (Crime Takes Hold of New Orleans. USA TODAY, December 1, 2006.) Orlando, Florida, reported 42 murders in the first 10 months in 2006, nearly double the 22 slayings last year in the city of 200,000 people. (USA TODAY, November 1, 2006) And in Washington, police department declared a crime emergency and a 10 p.m. curfew for juveniles in July 2006, after the city had 11 homicides in 13 days. (Police Chiefs Cite Youths in Crime Rise, Call for More Federal Funds. The Washington Post, August 31, 2006.) The Washington Post reported on December 14, 2006 that

there had been 35 bank robberies in Montgomery County in 2006, with three banks robbed on Dec. 13 within minutes of each other.

The United States has the largest number of privately owned guns in the world. The unchecked spread of guns has caused incessant murders. A report released by the U.S. Justice Department in 2006 said that in 2005, 477,040 victims of violent crimes stated that they faced an offender with a firearm. A Washington metropolitan police department report stated in 2006 that from 2001 to 2005, 901 of 1,126 homicide victims, or about 80percent, were fatally shot, while the percentage in New Orleans was 92 percent. (District Slaying Usually with Gun. The Washington Times, November 17, 2006.) Chicago was hit with 5 slayings and 3 injuries on late May 20 and early May 21, 2006. (Weekend Shooting Kill 5. The Chicago Tribune, May 22, 2006.) On Nov. 16, Detroit reported 2 people killed and 3 injured within 10 minutes in the western part of the city. (Detroit Man Charged with Murder, Assault in Apparently Random Shooting Spree That Killed 2. AP, Nov. 20, 2006.) In Kansas, Missouri, a man shot five people to death on Dec. 16, including his longtime girlfriend and three of their children. He then killed himself. (Man kills 5 in Family, Then Self. The Kansas City Star, Dec. 17, 2006.) And on Christmas Eve of 2006, a gunman opened fire at shopping people in a shopping mall in Florida, and then on the police, killing one man. (Mall Shooter Likely Knew Victim, Police Say. CNN.com, Dec. 24, 2006.)

Campus shootings are rampant in the United States. The country reported 3 campus shootings in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Colorado within one week from the end of September to the beginning of October 2006. Five girls were fatally shot and 6 others injured during the shooting incident in an Amish school in Pennsylvania on Oct. 2, 2006. (Man Shoots 11, Killing 5 Girls, in Amish School. The New York Times, Oct. 3, 2006.)

* II. On Human Rights Violations by Law Enforcement and Judicial Departments

In the United States, human rights violations committed by law enforcement and judicial departments are common.

Police abuses are very serious. A Human Rights Watch report issued on Dec. 4, 2006 said that since the Sept. 11 attacks, the U.S. Department of Justice has used the material witness warrant to imprison without charge at least 70 men. The Washington Post reported on Dec. 1, 2006 that citizen complaints filed with a review board about alleged New York Police Department abuses had increased by 60 percent from 2001 to 2005. Craig Futterman, a law professor of the University of Chicago who has studied the Chicago Police Department's handling of complaints against officers, said over the past five years, 662 out of 13,500 police officers in Chicago had been the subject of 10 or more complaints, and he saw "a picture of impunity within the Chicago Police Department. You have a small number of officers who perpetrate crimes who have absolute impunity." (The Chicago Tribune, November 29, 2006) In September 2006, four members of the Special Operations Section of the Chicago Police Department were arrested for allegations of a string of robberies, kidnappings and false arrests. But investigation showed that the police internal affairs division had been aware of numerous allegations against the officers for four years without taking disciplinary action against them. In November 2006, two former inmates at Cook County Jail filed suit in federal court alleging that they were attacked by guards and severely beaten while they were handcuffed. Michael Mejia, one of the inmates, was handcuffed by guards, who then grabbed the back of his neck and slammed his head and face into the cement wall. The officers also stomped and kicked the inmates when they were handcuffed and lying on the floor. The two men later filed complaints, but the jail's internal affairs division decided not to investigate. (Ex-inmates Charge County Jail Beating. The Chicago Tribune, November 15, 2006) On Nov. 17, 2006, Mostafa Tabatabaiejad, a 23-year-old senior of the UCLA, was stunned with a Taser by a campus police officer after he refused requests to show his ID card. (The Los Angeles Times, November 17, 2006) On the morning of Nov. 25, 2006, five officers from the New York Police Department fired 50 bullets at a car with three unarmed men inside after the car struck an unmarked police van. The car was struck by 21 bullets. One man in the car was killed and the other

two were wounded.(The Associated Press, November 25, 2006) On Dec. 5, 2006, a Los Angeles police officer, Sean Joseph Meade, was caught on videotape applying a chokehold to a handcuffed 16-year-old boy inside the Central Division station. The officer's actions were recorded by a hidden camera that had been installed in the chair. (The Los Angeles Times, December 8, 2006)

Injustice of the judiciary is quite shocking. A yearlong investigation by The New York Times of New York State's town and village courts found a long trail of judicial abuses and errors. In some cases, defendants were sent to jail without a guilty plea or a trial, or tossed from their homes without a proper proceeding. (In *Tiny Courts of N.Y., Abuses of Law and Power*. The New York Times, September 25, 2006) The Associated Press reported on March 4, 2006 that nearly all records are being kept secret for more than 5,000 defendants who completed their journey through the federal courts from 2003 to 2005. The percentage of defendants who have reached verdicts and been sentenced but still have most of their records sealed rose from 1.1 percent in 2003 to 2.7 percent in 2005. Such cases showed that the U.S. constitutional presumption for openness in the courts is not honored.

Frame-up and wrong cases can be widely found. The Los Angeles Times reported in June 2006 that investigations and reviews by experts from the University of Michigan on 328 controversial criminal cases over the past 17 years found that all of them are frame-up or wrong cases. Based on that finding, experts estimated that currently there were tens of thousands innocent people jailed in the United States. A man in Chicago had been in prison since the mid 1990s after being convicted of raping a woman, and police turned down his repeated requests for DNA tests on the pretext of lack of evidence. In 2006, he was told that new DNA tests show that he was not the assailant. Following the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other government agencies have referred 6,472 individuals to prosecutors on terrorism-related charges. The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University said nearly three-quarters of terrorism suspects seized by the United States in the five years following the September 11 attacks have not even made it to trial because of lack of evidence against them. In 64 percent of the cases, federal prosecutors decided that they were not worth prosecuting, while an additional nine percent were either dismissed by judges or the individuals were found not guilty. (Agence France-Presse, September 4, 2006)

The United States has the world's largest number of prisoners. According to a report issued by the U.S. Department of Justice on Nov. 30, 2006, by the end of 2005, nearly 2.2 million inmates were held in state and federal prisons or county and municipal jails. The adult U.S. correctional population, including those on probation or parole, reached a high of more than seven million men and women for the first time. About three percent of the U.S. adult population, or one in every 32 adults, were in the nation's prisons and jails or on probation or parole. Four states-Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi and Oklahoma-have incarceration rates of more than 650 per 100,000, with Louisiana soaring above all other states with the astonishing rate of 797. (US Addiction to Incarceration Puts 2.3 Million in Prison. Human Rights Watch, December 1, 2006) As a result, state prisons were operating between one percent under and 14 percent over capacity. The federal system was operating at 34 percent over capacity. (Agence France-Presse, November 30, 2006) According to a report of New York-based China Press on October 4, 2006, there were currently 173,000 people jailed in the prisons of California State, and 1,700 of them failed to have normal living conditions. In 33 prisons the number of inmates was more than twice the capacity. Some gymnasiums were changed into temporary shelters for prisoners and even churches were used temporarily for prisoners to sleep.

Abuses in U.S. prisons are also common. The United States is the only country in the world that allows the use of police dogs to terrify prisoners. An investigative report by the Human Rights Watch said that five state prison systems in the United States, including Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, South Dakota and Utah, permit the use of aggressive, unmuzzled dogs to terrify and even attack prisoners in efforts to remove them from their cells. Connecticut prisons were found to have used police dogs for nearly 20 times to take on prisoners. In Iowa State, 63 such cases were

reported from March 2005 to March 2006. A U.S. government report, issued on Jan. 16, 2006, said that abuses of illegal immigrants happened in five prisons, which were negligent to illegal immigrants who went on hunger strike or committed suicide. The illegal immigrants were also provided with half-cooked food. (The Washington Post, January 17, 2007) It was reported that the Florida State Prison used chemical agents against prisoners 238 times in 2000, 285 times in 2001, 447 in 2002 and 611 in 2003 and 277 in 2004, which left 10 prisoners seriously injured and some with mental diseases. (www. Allhatnocattle.net, February 13, 2006) The United States has nearly 60 "super-security prisons", housing about 2,000 prisoners. The inmates are jailed in 6-square-meter wards, which are sound proof with lights and monitors on around the clock. Such prisons have left many prisoners with mental diseases. What's more, prisoners are often deprived of some basic rights. An editorial of The New York Times on July 31, 2006 said that the United States has the worst record in the "free world" when it comes to stripping convicted felons of the right to vote. In contrast, most European countries hold that right so dear that they bring ballot boxes into prisons.

Prisons become hotbeds of diseases and crimes. A report, issued by the U.S. Department of Justice on Sept. 7, 2006, said that more than half of the inmates in U.S. prisons suffered from mental problems. About 56 percent of inmates in state prisons, 64 percent in detention houses and 45 percent of federal prisoners had received treatment or shown symptoms of various mental diseases, including serious melancholia, mania and hallucination. More than 1.5 million inmates are released each year carrying life threatening contagious diseases. (Rising Prison Problems Begin to Trickle into Society. USA Today, June 12, 2006) Each year, approximately 7,000 Americans died in U.S. prisons and jails. Some of these deaths are from natural causes, but many more result from mental disorders left undiagnosed and diseases left untreated. (Prison Death: A National Shame. The Baltimore Sun, December 6, 2006) A report published by the U.S. Department of Justice in November 2006 showed that an estimated 37 percent of county and municipal jail inmates reported having a current medical problem other than a cold or virus in a national survey. During 2004, the number of confirmed AIDS cases in state and federal prisons increased from 5,944 to 6,027. The rate of confirmed AIDS cases instate and federal prisoners (50 per 10,000 prison inmates) was more than three times higher than in total U.S. population (15 per 10,000 persons). Suicides among inmates are rising. The USA TODAY reported on Dec. 28, 2006 that 41 inmates committed suicides in California in 2006. In Texas's prison system, there were 24 suicides. Texas prisons also reported 652 attempted suicides in 2006, an increase of 17 percent compared with the number in 2005.

Sexual assaults in U.S. prisons are common. A report by the United Nations Committee Against Torture on May 19, 2006 said that at least 13 percent of inmates in U.S. prisons had suffered from sexual assaults and many have suffered frequent sexual abuses. It estimated that nearly 200,000 inmates currently in prisons were or will become victims of sexual violence. The number of prisoners who had suffered sexual assaults over the past 20 years is likely to exceed one million.

* III. On Civil and Political Rights

In recent years, American citizens have suffered increasing civil rights infringements.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the U.S. government has put average Americans under intense surveillance as part of terrorism investigations. According to a survey released in December 2006, two-thirds of Americans believe that the FBI and other federal agencies are intruding on their privacy rights. (The Washington Post, Dec. 13, 2006) A report from the U.S. Justice Department, dated April 28, 2006, disclosed that its use of electronic surveillance and search warrants in national security investigations jumped 15 percent in 2005. According to the report, the FBI issued 9,254 national security letters in 2005, covering 3,501 U.S. citizens and legal foreign residents. The Justice Department said the data did not include what probably were thousands of additional letters issued to obtain more limited information about some individuals or letters that were issued about targets who were in the U.S. illegally. (The Los Angeles Times, April 29, 2006) Reports

show a Pentagon research team monitors more than 5,000 jihadist web sites, focusing daily on the 25 to 100 most hostile and active. (MSNBC News Service, May 4, 2006) An internal memo of the FBI shows that the agency has spent resources gathering information on antiwar and environmental protesters and on activists who feed vegetarian meals to the homeless. In the United States, the government has been secretly collecting the phone call records of tens of millions of Americans. According to USA TODAY, more employers feel they have justifiable reason to pry, track workers' whereabouts through Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite, implant employees with microchips with their knowledge and hire private investigators to check up on what employees are really doing at work. According to a study by the American Management Association and The ePolicy Institute, 76 percent of companies monitor employees' website connections, 65 percent block access to specific sites, and 36 percent track the content, keystrokes and time spent at the keyboard. More than half of employers retain and review e-mail messages. (USA TODAY, Nov. 7, 2006)

As The Associated Press reported on Jan. 4, 2007, a signing statement attached to postal legislation by U.S. administration may have opened the way for the government to open mail without a warrant. An internal review of the U.S. State Department has found that U.S. officials screened the public statements and writings of private citizens for criticism of the administration before deciding whether to select them for foreign speaking projects. The vetting practice, the Washington Post said, appears to have been part of the administration's pattern of controlling information, muffling dissenting views. (The Washington Post, Nov. 2, 2006) On May 23, 2006, Electronic Frontier Foundation, a U.S.-based organization committed to protecting citizens' privacy, accused the FBI for undercutting the intent of the privacy law, saying the agency has built a database with more than 659 million records culled from more than 50 FBI and other government agency sources. (<http://www.eff.org/press/> Aug. 30, 2006)

The United States touts itself as the "beacon of democracy", but the U.S. mode of democracy is in essence one in which money talks.

In 2004, candidates for the House of Representatives who raised less than one million U.S. dollars had almost no chance of winning, the USA TODAY quoted a spokesman for the Center for Responsive Politics as saying in a report on Oct. 29, 2006. The average successful Senate campaign cost 7 million dollars, it said. In 2006, all state campaigns in the United States were predicted to cost about 2.4 billion dollars. In California, the oil and tobacco industries were the year's two biggest spenders with a total of 161.6 million dollars, and they became the two biggest winners. (The Los Angeles Times, Nov. 9, 2006) In the House race in Pennsylvania, the National Republican Congressional Committee spent 3.9 million dollars, mostly in ads against Democratic candidate Lois Murphy, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spent 3 million dollars against Republican candidate Jim Gerlach. (The Baltimore Sun, Nov. 6, 2006) Seventy-four percent of respondents to a new Opinion Research poll say the U.S. Congress is generally out of touch with average Americans, as CNN reported on Oct. 18, 2006, and 79 percent of the surveyed say they feel big business does have too much influence over the administration's decisions.

Corruption is a serious problem in U.S. politics. More than 1,000 government employees, including hundreds of police officers, have been convicted in FBI graft cases in the past two years. Former high-powered lobbyist Jack Abramoff pleaded guilty to conspiracy, fraud and tax evasion charges, revealing the biggest scandal of trading money for power to hit Washington in decades. (CNN, Jan. 3, 2006) Meanwhile, four Republicans have resigned from the House under clouds in the year. A handful of other members of the Congress are under investigation. (USA TODAY, Dec. 12, 2006) Over the past five and a half years, U.S. Republican and Democratic lawmakers accepted nearly 50 million U.S. dollars in trips, often to resorts and exclusive locales, as The Washington Post reported on June 6, 2006. From January 2000 through June 2005, House and Senate members and their aides were away from Washington for more than 81,000 days - a combined 222 years - on at least 23,000 trips. U.S. lawmakers accepted thousands of costly jaunts

to some of the world's choicest destinations: at least 200 to Paris, 150 to Hawaii and 140 to Italy, it said. Twenty-five individual lawmakers accepted more than 120,000 U.S. dollars worth of travel during the period and private trip sponsors spent the most money on about two dozen congressional offices. (Seattle Times, June 6, 2006)

In the United States scandals of government manipulating the media give the lie to press freedom in the country. To serve its political purposes, the U.S. government often produces fake news stories and passes them off as normal news to domestic and overseas audiences. The U.S. State Department, among 20 federal agencies, was found to have produced and distributed such items. (The Independent, May 29, 2006) In recent years, some journalists were harassed or detained by U.S. law enforcement agencies for declining to reveal their sources. In 2005, a Rhode Island TV reporter spent four months confined at home by a judge for refusing to expose the source. In San Francisco, a federal prosecutor tried to force two San Francisco Chronicle reporters to reveal sources of secret grand jury testimony used in stories. (USA TODAY, June 22, 2006) Two journalists were sentenced to 18 months in prison for contempt of court in September 2006 and another Los Angeles freelancer was sent to prison for a year on contempt charge after refusing to turn over to a grand jury his private video clips. (SFGate.com August 1, 2006)

* IV. On Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The United States is the richest country in the world, but it lacks proper guarantee for people's economic, social and cultural rights.

The Americans in poverty constitute the "Third World" of U.S. society. A report released by the U.S. Census Bureau on August. 29,2006 said there were 37 million people living in poverty in 2005, accounting for 12.6 percent of total U.S. population. The report also said there were 7.7 million families in poverty and one out of eight Americans was living in poverty in 2005. The poverty rates of Cleveland and Detroit were as high as 32.4 percent and 31.4 percent respectively and nearly one out of three was living under the poverty line. AFP reported on Feb. 24, 2007 that based on the latest available US census data, the McClatchy Newspapers analysis found that almost 16 million Americans live in "deep or severe poverty", the highest number since at least 1975, up by 26 percent from 2000 to 2005. Between 2000 and 2005, the U.S. economy grew by 12 percent in real terms and productivity, measured by output per hour worked in the business sector, rose 17 percent. Over the same period, the median hourly wage-the wage the average American takes home-rose only three percent in real (inflation-adjusted) terms. That compared with a 12 percent gain in the previous five years was lower than it was in 2000. (Financial Times, Nov. 2, 2006)

Hunger and homelessness remain a critical issue. A report released by U.S. Department of Agriculture on Nov. 15, 2006 revealed that in the previous year 34.8 million Americans did not have enough money or other resources to buy food. A survey on 23 U.S. cities including Chicago, Boston and Los Angeles by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that in 2006 requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of seven percent over 2005, with 74 percent of the cities registering an increase. Also, requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of nine percent over 2005, with 68 percent of the surveyed cities showing an increase. (U.S. Conference of Mayors-Sodexo, Inc. Release 2006 Hunger and Homelessness Survey, www.usmayors.org) Currently, there are 600,000 or so homeless people nationwide, including 16,000 homeless in Washington D.C. and 3,800 in New York City. (The New York Times, The Washington Post and Reuters reports, October to December, 2006) It is estimated there are 3,000 to 4,000 homeless people in Baltimore on any given night. (The Baltimore Sun, Nov. 20, 2006) In Hawaii, around 1,000 homeless people are living in tents along beaches. (The New York Times, Dec. 4, 2006) A survey found that in Los Angeles City and surrounding communities there were 88,345 homeless people, and the mayor declared the city to be "the capital of homelessness in America." (The Los Angeles Times, Jan. 12, 2006)

The average living standards in the United States are among the highest in the world but the United States lags behind most countries in legal protection for labor and family-friendly policies in the workplace. The Voice of America reported on Feb. 4, 2007 that a study of 173 countries with high, middle and low income jointly conducted by Harvard University and McGill University found the United States is one of the only five countries that do not guarantee some form of paid maternity leave, the other four countries being Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea. Of the 173 countries, 137 provide paid annual leave but there is no federal law to guarantee such leave in the United States. One hundred and forty five countries provide paid sick leave for their workers but the United States has no federal law on this, leaving it to be decided by employers. The United States has no law on maximum work week length or a limit on mandatory overtime per week, but 134 countries have laws in this regard. There is no guarantee in the United States to protect working women's right to breast-feeding but at least 107 countries ensure their working women have breast-feeding breaks. The United States guarantees fathers neither paid paternity nor paid parental leave, but 65 countries grant fathers either paid paternity or paid parental leave.

Quite a few Americans are not covered by basic health insurance. A report released by the U.S. Census Bureau on August. 29, 2006 said the number of people without health insurance coverage rose to 46.6 million in 2005, accounting for 15.9 percent of the total population and up 1.3 million over 2004. Minnesota had the lowest percentage of uninsured of 8.7 percent and Texas had the highest percentage of uninsured of 25 percent. From 2003 to 2006, the basic Medicare premium increased more than 50 percent to 88.50 U.S. dollars a month from 58.7 U.S. dollars in 2003 and it was predicted that it would rise to 98.20 U.S. dollars in 2007. The administration said the cost of the drug benefit would grow an average of 11.5 percent a year in the next decade, more than twice as fast as the economy. (The New York Times, May 2, 2006) Statistics showed, in the past six years, average annual Medicare cost of a U.S. family reached 11,500 US dollars or nearly 3,000 for each American every year. More and more Americans are unable to afford the high Medicare expenses and looking for overseas medical treatment. In 2005, some 500,000 uninsured Americans trekked overseas for medical treatment, according to the National Coalition on Health Care. (Eagle-Tribune, Nov. 27, 2006)

* V. On Racial Discrimination

Racial segregation and discrimination are still deep-seated in the United States. African-Americans and other colored people are still living in "another United States".

The ethnic minorities are at the bottom of American society. Statistics released by the U.S. Census Bureau in November 2006 indicated that according to the 2005 data, the average yearly household income was 50,622 U.S. dollars for whites, compared with 36,278 for Hispanics and 30,940 for blacks. White people's income was 64 percent more than the blacks and 40 percent more than the Hispanics. Three-fourths of white households owned their homes in 2005, compared with 46 percent of black households and 48 percent of Hispanic households. (The Washington Post, Nov. 14, 2006) The poverty rate for whites was 8.3 percent in 2005, while the rates were 24.9 percent for blacks and 21.8 percent for Hispanics. (U.S. Census Bureau, Aug. 29, 2006) Nearly one in five Hispanics lacked sufficient access to nutritious food and one in 20 regularly went hungry. Blacks took up 42 percent of all the homeless people in the United States. (USA TODAY, Dec. 22, 2006) The percentage of colored people uncovered by government health insurance was much higher than that of whites. In 2005, the uninsured rate was 32.7 percent for Hispanics and 19.6 for blacks, compared with 11.3 percent for whites. And in the hurricane-hit southern area, the poor and blacks lived a much worse life. During its eighty-seventh session the UN Human Rights Committee noted in its consideration of a report submitted by the United States on its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, that the committee "remains concerned about information that poor people and in particular African-Americans were disadvantaged by the rescue and evacuation plans implemented when Hurricane Katrina hit the United States, and continue to be disadvantaged under the reconstruction plans". (Human Rights Committee, Eighty-seventh session, 10-28 July 2006)

The African-Americans and other ethnic minorities have been subject to discrimination in employment and workplace. The unemployment rate of the blacks was more than twice that of the whites. According to statistics released by the U.S. Department of Labor on Dec. 8, 2006, the unemployment rate in November 2006 was 8.6 percent for the blacks and 3.9 percent for the whites. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission receives more than 500 complaints against racial discrimination every week and more than 26,000 every year; in fiscal year 2005, it received 26,740 charges of race discrimination. A report released by an economic and policy research center in the United States on Dec. 15, 2006 said that biased government policies and negative coverage of the media have limited the development of the youngsters of ethnic minorities in the U.S. Whites are more easily to be promoted to the management than the blacks and Hispanics. An African-American employee of Merrill Lynch & Co. accused the largest U.S. retail brokerage of racial discrimination in 2005. And in 2006, 16 current and former black employees of the company joined the lawsuit, accusing Merrill of systematic and pervasive discrimination against African-American brokers and trainees nationwide in hiring, promotion and compensation. Tyson Foods Inc., the largest U.S. meat company was also accused by thirteen current and former African-American employees of racial discrimination in 2006. (Reuters, Nov. 7, 2006)

Racial disparities in education are also growing. According to U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 data, in the United States more than half ethnic minority males dropped school before high school graduation, 67.5 percent Hispanics and 53 percent blacks got no further education after graduating from high school. White Americans were more likely to hold a graduate or professional degree. At least 30 percent white adults held a bachelor's degree, compared with 17 percent black adults and 12 percent Hispanic adults. Racial segregation in education is in fact quite serious. According to a symposium held in the University of California at Los Angeles in October 2006, in the Los Angeles school district, 67 percent Hispanic students studied in 90 percent to 100 percent non-white schools. The racial divide in Los Angeles high schools was more serious. In Beverly High School, 73 percent students were whites, 8 percent were Asians, and 6 percent were Hispanics. As a contrast, among the 4,940 students in Roosevelt High School, 98.9 percent were Hispanics and 1 percent were blacks. There were big disparities in school facilities due to the racial divide.

Racial discrimination is deep-rooted in America's law enforcement and judicial systems. Discrimination against Muslims in law enforcement has persisted in the United States since the September 11 attacks. According to Associated Press reports, in November 2006 six Muslims, who were returning from a religious conference, were taken off an airliner from Minneapolis to Phoenix, handcuffed and questioned, only because a passenger had passed a note about them to a flight attendant. In the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks, four airlines accused of breaking federal anti-discrimination laws settled with the government. Transportation Department investigations found the airlines had unlawfully removed passengers because of perceived ethnic or religious backgrounds. (The Associated Press, Nov. 28, 2006) And Latino and African-American motorists in most areas of Los Angeles were significantly more likely than whites to be asked during police stops to leave their vehicles and submit to searches, according to a study ordered by the city in 2006 (Los Angeles Times, July 13, 2006).

In judicial practice, blacks are usually more severely punished than whites. According to statistics of the National Urban League, of the sentences issued in 12 crime categories in the State Courts, sentences for black males were longer than white males in all of them. (The State of Black America 2006, issued by National Urban League, March 27, 2006) Black people account for only 12.1 percent of the U.S. population, however, according to statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice, at the end of 2005, about 40 percent of all male inmates sentenced to more than one year were black, and 20 percent were Latino Americans. According to a report released by the Human Rights Watch on Dec. 1, 2006, the number of black inmates was 6.6 times that of whites and the number of Latino inmates was 2.5 times that of white inmates. Statistics showed that about one out of 12 black men were in jail or prison, compared with one in 100 white men. Researchers pointed

to poverty, a lack of opportunities, racism in the criminal justice system for the black-white prison gap. (Answer to AIDS Mystery Found Behind Bars, Washington Post, March 9, 2006)

Racial segregation and discrimination results in an increase of hate crimes. The number of extreme racist and neo-Nazi organizations has increased by 33 percent in recent five years, rising from 672 in 2004 to 803 in 2005. ([Argentina] Clarin, May 25, 2006) Meanwhile, the number of hate crimes kept increasing. An analysis of the 7,160 single-bias incidents by bias motivation revealed that 54.7 percent were motivated by a racial bias. (FBI press release, Oct. 16, 2006) New York City reported 230 hate crimes in 2006, about 8 percent more than in 2005, with the number of those targeted at Asian Americans more than doubled.

A CNN/Opinion Research poll published in December 2006 found that 84 percent of blacks and 66 percent of whites believe racism is a serious problem, and there are many different kinds of racism aimed at many different groups in U.S. society. (CNN, Dec. 15, 2006) ;i

* VI. On the Rights of Women, Children, the Elderly and the Disabled

The human rights situation of women, children, the elderly and the disabled in the United States is worrisome.

Women in the United States do not share equal rights with men in politics. Despite the fact that women outnumber men in the U.S. population, they hold only 82 seats in the 109th U.S. Congress, including 14 seats or 14 percent of the Senate and 68 or 15.6 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives. Among the 243 mayors of the cities with a population of over 100,000 in the United States, only 35 were women by January 2006. By December 2006, there were only 78 women serving in statewide executive office, 24.8 percent of the total 315 working posts, and 22.8 percent of the state legislators in the United States were women. (Women in Elective Office 2006, issued by Center for American Women and Politics, Dec. 2, 2006)

American women and men are not equally paid for the same work, and the income of women has always been lower than that of men. Statistics released by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2006 said the median earnings of women and men were about 32,000 and 42,000 U.S. dollars, respectively. The female-to-male earnings ratio was 76 percent. (U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov) On November 29, 2006, two female brokers of the Citigroup joined three others in filing an amended complaint with a local court in California, charging that the bank's policies were designed to deprive female brokers of opportunities offered to male brokers, and Citigroup kept male brokers at the top of the compensation scale and female brokers at the bottom. (Reuters, New York, Nov. 29, 2006)

Low-income American women lack proper labor protection and social security and live a hard life. A survey by the Community Service Society showed that among low-income working mothers living on less than 32,000 U.S. dollars for a family of three, more than half were not entitled to even a single day of paid sick leave; 61 percent did not have paid vacation; and 80 percent did not receive any employee health benefits for themselves or their children. In 2005, 37 percent of the low-wage mothers had to give up necessary medical care, and a third had their electricity or phone turned off because they could not pay the bills. Forty-three percent had to rely on food pantries, and 42 percent fell behind in their rent. (The Other Mothers, The New York Times, May 14, 2006) The poverty rate of single mothers is the highest in the population of the United States. A report released by the U.S. Census Bureau on August 29, 2006 showed that 28.9 percent of the mothers in the United States were single in 2005, and about 4 million were living below the poverty line.

The rate of female prisoners keeps increasing. Since 1995, the annual rate of growth in female prisoners averaged 4.6 percent. Females account for 7 percent of all prisoners in the United States. (Prisoners in 2005, U.S. Department of Justice, Nov. 30, 2006) The United Nation's Committee Against Torture reported on May 19, 2006 that treatment of female detainees in U.S. prisons

needed to be improved urgently. The recommendations were made on the fact that female detainees were humiliated in prisons in the United States, where pregnant women had been kept in chains and leg restraints into the third trimester of their pregnancies; some had been shackled even while in labor. In March 2006, Chen Xucai, a woman from China's Fujian Province, was arrested in New York for selling fake brand name handbags. She was later found pregnant in jail. The jailers not only mistreated her rudely but also stopped her medication, resulting in her abortion in prison. (The China Press, New York, March 19, 2006)

American women face high risks of sexual offense. The FBI reported in September 2006 that during 2005, there were an estimated 93,934 female victims of forcible rape, or 62.5 out of every 100,000 women suffered from forcible rape. Women are often sexually harassed while at work. Statistics released by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2006 showed that the commission received 12,679 charges of sexual harassment in 2005, with 85.7 percent of them filed by women.

American children are among the groups with high poverty rate. According to figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau in August 2006, 12.9 million children under 18 lived below the poverty line by the end of 2005, accounting for 17.6 percent of the population of this age group and 35.2 percent of the 37 million people in poverty in the United States. Twenty percent of children under six lived in poverty, and 42.8 percent of children under 18 living in female headed families, with no husband present, were poor. In Los Angeles County, an estimated three-quarters of the county's more than 1.2 million households with children struggled economically. Other statistics showed that the number of uninsured children under 18 increased from 7.9 million in 2004 to 8.3 million in 2005, and the proportion rose to 11.2 percent. (www.census.gov)

There are a large number of homeless children in the United States. According to a report of the Mexican newspaper El Universal on April 10, 2006, nearly 1.3 million American children who were homeless or fled home wandered in streets. Among the children aged 10 to 18, one out of seven fled home. About 5,000 waifs were killed every year in fights, diseases and suicide. Children in homeless families represent about 55 percent of the roughly 2,000 homeless people in Fairfax County, which has about 1 million residents. (USA TODAY, Dec. 22, 2006) In California, there were 95,000 homeless children in 2005-06 school year, and two-thirds of them were primary school students.

The number of missing children is alarming. Reports said the U.S. Department of Justice received nearly 800,000 cases of missing children and kidnapping every year. The Department said among the nearly 100 dangerous missing cases each year, about 40 percent of the missing children were killed eventually. ([Mexico]El Universal, April 10, 2006)

The United States is one of the few countries that sentence child offenders to death. Statistics showed that among the 2,985 inmates sentenced to death for whom the date of arrest was available, 342 inmates, or 11 percent, were 19 or younger at the time of their arrest. (U.S. Department of Justice, Dec. 10, 2006, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs)

American juveniles often fall victim to on-campus violence crimes. Statistics showed that from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005, there were 21 homicides at American schools. Twenty-eight percent of students 12 to 18 years old reported being bullied at school, and 24 percent of students reported that there were gangs at their schools during the first six months of 2005. The Los Angeles Times reported on Nov. 14, 2006 that about 7,400 students were arrested for on-campus crimes in Chicago schools during the 2005-06 school year.

The situation of the elderly people in the United States is worrisome. Statistics released by U.S. Census Bureau in 2006 showed that the number for seniors aged above 65 in poverty increased from 3.5 million in 2004 to 3.6 million in 2005, with the poverty rate reaching 10.1 percent. A total of 1.5 million older Americans live in nursing homes, 90 percent of which have inadequate

staffing. (The New York Times, Nov. 14, 2006) In California, 100,000 elder abuse cases were filed in 2003, accounting for 20 percent of the 500,000 similar reports nationwide. Some 6,000 cases of elder abuse were reported annually in Orange County in California. (The New York Times, Sept. 27, 2006)

The rights and interests of the disabled people in the United States are not properly protected. The Associated Press reported on April 10, 2006 that only 34 percent of working-age people with disabilities had full-time or part-time jobs over the past two decades, while people without disabilities had an employment rate of 78 percent. People with disabilities are nearly three times more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities; 26 percent of people with disabilities had annual household income below 15,000 U.S. dollars, versus 9 percent those without disabilities. A survey conducted in Los Angeles County showed that 49 percent of the 88,345 homeless people in the county had a physical or mental disability. (The New York Times, Jan. 15, 2006)

* VII. On the United States' Violation of Human Rights in Other Countries

Relying on its strong military power, the United States have trespassed on the sovereignty of other countries and violated human rights in other countries.

A large number of innocent Iraqi civilians have died in the war launched by the United States in 2003. On Oct. 11, 2006, the Washington Post reported that a survey of Bloomberg School of Public Health under Johns Hopkins University estimated that more than 655,000 Iraqis have died in Iraq since war started in March 2003, meaning about 500 unexpected violent deaths per day throughout the country. The estimate was produced by interviewing residents during a random sampling of households in 47 neighborhood clusters throughout Iraq. On Nov. 19, 2005, a U.S. marine unit searched an Iraqi community door-to-door and slaughtered 24 Iraqi civilians after a marine was killed by a roadside bomb in Haditha. Those who died included a 76-year-old disabled man, a three-year-old child, and seven women. (Haditha 'Massacre' - One Year on, BBC News, Nov. 19, 2006) According to another report by British newspaper the Sunday Times (March 26, 2006), a family of eleven were shot dead by U.S. troops on March 15, 2006; among the dead were five children aged from six months to five years, and four women. On March 12, 2006, four U.S. soldiers raped 14-year-old girl Abeer Qassim al-Janabi and then killed her, her parents and her five-year-old sister ([UK] The Independent website Aug. 7, 2006). On May 31, 2006, U.S. forces killed two Iraqi women, one of them about to give birth, when the troops shot at a car that failed to stop at an observation post in a city north of Baghdad. On June 5, 2006, CNN reported that U.S. squad took a 52-year-old disabled Iraqi to a roadside hole and shot him before planting a shovel and an AK-47 to make it appear that he was an insurgent planting a bomb. On December 8, 2006, U.S.-led forces killed 20 suspected insurgents during a raid targeting fighters from the group al-Qaeda in Iraq northwest of Baghdad. Amir Alwan, mayor of Ishaqi, said 10 men, four women and 10 children in his village were killed (The Washington Post, Dec. 9, 2006). The Associated Press reported that on May 9, 2006 four U.S. soldiers murdered three suspected insurgents (Iraqi civilians) during a raid called "Objective Murray" in Salah ad-Din of Iraq. Raymond L. Girouard, a soldier of the four, said they were under orders to "kill all military age males", which is also the ROE (rule of engagement) of "Objective Murray".

The United States has a flagrant record of violating the Geneva Convention in systematically abusing prisoners during the Iraqi War and the War in Afghanistan. A report released in News Night of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), originally provided by the U.S.-based Human Rights First, showed that since August 2002, 98 prisoners had died in American-run prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the dead, 34 died of premeditated murder, 11 deaths were suspicious, and 8 to 12 were tortured to death (AFP, Feb. 21, 2006). A Human Rights Watch report in July 2006 said torture and other abuses against detainees in U.S. custody in Iraq were authorized and routine. Detainees were routinely subject to severe beating, painful stress positions, severe sleep deprivation, and exposure to extreme cold and hot temperatures. Soldiers were told that many

abusive techniques were authorized by the military chain of command and Geneva Conventions did not apply to the detainees at their facility. Detainees at Camp Nama, a U.S. detention center at the Baghdad airport - in violation of international law - not registered with the International Committee of the Red Cross, were regularly stripped naked and subject to beatings. Some detainees were used for target practice. In May 2006 human rights group Amnesty International condemned the detention of some 14,000 prisoners in Iraq without charge or trial. On February 15, 2006, Australia's SBS TV aired more than 10 pictures and video clips taken at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison; the images included: a man's throat was cut off, left forearm of a man was left with burns and shrapnel wounds, a blood-stained interrogation room, and a seemingly insane man's body covered with his own feces. U.S. army's criminal investigation division gathered materials included 1,325 photographs and 93 video clips of suspected abuse of detainees, 546 photographs of suspected dead Iraqi detainees, all recorded between Oct. 18 and Dec. 30, 2003 ([UK] Guardian, Feb. 17, 2006). Another report carried by the New York Times in December 2006 says a man named Donald Vance, a 29-year-old Navy veteran from Chicago who went to Iraq as a security contractor, was detained by American soldiers and put into detention center Camp Cropper for 97 days. The man said American guards arrived at his cell periodically, shackled his hands and feet, blindfolded him and took him to a padded room for interrogation. When he was returned to his cell, he was fatigued but unable to sleep, for the fluorescent lights were never turned off and at most hours, heavy metal or country music blared in the corridor. He was not allowed to use telephone and denied the right to a lawyer at detention hearings. The New York Times reported on March 18, 2006 that an elite Special Operations forces unit Task Force 6-26 converted one of Saddam Hussein's former military bases near Baghdad into a top-secret detention center. There, American soldiers made one of the former Iraqi government's torture chambers into their own interrogation cell. They named it the Black Room. In the windowless, jet-black garage-size room, some soldiers beat prisoners with rifle butts.

According to another report by British newspaper The Independent, 460 people were confined in the Guantanamo prison camp, including dozens of adolescent prisoners, with more than 60 under 18 and the youngest only 14. A young man named Mohammed el-Gharani was allegedly accused of member of al-Qaeda and conspiracy in the 1998 al-Qaeda London terrorist conspiracy when he was only 12. In 2001, he was arrested at the age of 14 ([UK] The Independent, Children of Guantanamo Bay, May 28, 2006). According to a report by the Washington Post, on May 30, 2006, 75 prisoners in Guantanamo went on a hunger strike against U.S. soldiers' maltreatment. On June 10, 2006, three prisoners hung themselves with bed sheets and clothing (The Associated Press, June 11, 2006). Mani Shaman Turki al-Habardi Al-Utaybi's family said his organs including the brain, liver, kidney and heart were all taken away when the corpse arrived. Mani Shaman Turki al-Habardi Al-Utaybi's cousin said that might be done to conceal the truth behind his brother's death. Another Saudi Arabian prisoner's father thought his son's death was not suicide but intentional hanging as he found bruises on his son's body. The Amnesty International described it as another "indictment" of the worsening U.S. human rights record. Human rights experts with the United Nations have condemned the United States for long-term arbitrary detention of suspects and abuses of detainees as serious violations of international law and relevant international conventions.

The U.S. Military Commissions Act signed into law on October 17, 2006 allows more severe means be used to interrogate terrorist suspects. Martin Scheinin, UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedom, issued a statement noting that a number of provisions of the Act contradict the universal and fundamental principles of fair trial standards and due process enshrined in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and relevant provisions of the International Convention on Civil Rights and Political Rights (UN Expert on Human Rights and Counter Terrorism Concerned That Military Commissions Act is Now Law in United States. Press Release, United Nations, October 27, 2006).

The United Nations and all peace- and justice-loving countries and people have unanimously condemned the U.S. act of disregarding internationally recognized human rights principles and

trespassing on other countries' sovereignty and human rights. In July 2006, at its 87th session the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern over U.S. infringements on human rights overseas. The committee also expressed concerned and raised recommendations on U.S. security measures, detaining people secretly and in secret places for long periods, abuses of prisoners, and non-compliance with international conventions in the war on terror. On June 14, 2006 five independent UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights issued a joint statement calling on the United States to immediately close the Guantanamo Bay detention center (UN rights experts call for immediate closure of US Guantanamo centre after suicides, UN News Center, June 14, 2006. <http://www.un.org/>).

America's international image has been greatly hurt by its government's violation of human rights flaunting the banner of "safeguarding human rights". A poll by the BBC World Service released on January 23, 2007 showed that the image of the United States has deteriorated around the world in the past year. During the poll 26,381 people were questioned in 25 countries. Some 73 percent of the total disapproved of the U.S. government's handling of the military campaign in Iraq, with 49 percent of respondents saying Washington was playing a mainly negative role internationally. An average of only 29 percent of some 18,000 people surveyed in 18 countries over the last three months believed that the United States is having a mainly positive influence internationally, down 7 percent from the previous poll conducted a year earlier.

Though the poll did not directly address their reasons, GlobeScan President Doug Miller told AFP by phone, the negative views appeared to be driven by US intervention in the Middle East and the "disconnect" between its declared values and actions, such as in Guantanamo Bay (AFP, London, Jan. 23, 2007).

To "name and shame" other countries in annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices is a world strategy of the U.S. government to wage the Cold War in the second half of the last century and typical of Cold War mentality. To interfere in other countries' internal affairs and provoke international confrontations on human rights issues not only violates universally recognized international law principles such as equality of sovereignty and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, but also goes against the trend of our times, which promotes peace, development and cooperation, and encourages dialogue instead of confrontation in the field of human rights. The United States has lorded it over other countries by condemning other countries' human rights practices while ignoring its own problems, which exposes its double standard and hegemonism on the human rights issue. We urge the U.S. government to acknowledge its own human rights problems and stop interfering in other countries' internal affairs under the pretext of human rights.

8 March 2007