

U.S. Human Rights Presentations in 2014-15

In 2014 and 2015, the U.S. government will make four presentations to United Nations committees in Geneva showcasing the United States' human right record and engaging on a wide range of questions about our laws and practices. These presentations provide vital opportunities to demonstrate to the world our country's commitment to protecting human rights domestically through the operation of our comprehensive system of laws, policies, and programs at all levels of government – federal, state, local, insular, and tribal.

The State Department has made available to the public a wealth of materials relevant to U.S. human rights treaty reports and presentations – including links to treaty texts, U.S. treaty reports, prior letters to state, local, insular, and tribal governments, and more – at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/reports/treaties/index.htm> (“*U.S. Treaty Reports* website”).

1. March 2014: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The ICCPR, one of the seminal human rights treaties concluded following World War II, covers a broad range of international human rights obligations. The ICCPR requires each State Party to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the ICCPR, which include: civil rights, equal protection and equality before the law; liberty and security of person; rights of persons deprived of liberty; right to fair trial; freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence; freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, expression, association, peaceful assembly, and movement; protection of the family and children; access to the political system; and the rights of members of minorities with regard to culture, religion, and language. The United States ratified the ICCPR in 1992.

In December 2011, the United States submitted its Fourth Periodic Report on the implementation of its obligations under the ICCPR to the UN Human Rights Committee, an entity created by the ICCPR in order to receive and review such reports by States Parties, among other functions. This report was accompanied by the U.S. “Common Core Document” (CCD), which contained background information on the United States' demographics, laws, and institutions relevant to all human rights treaties to which the United States is a party, and Annex A to the CCD, which contained information on state, local, insular and tribal government activities and programs that advance implementation of U.S. obligations under these treaties. These reports are available on the *U.S. Treaty Reports* website, under the ICCPR heading.

In accordance with the standard procedure of the UN Human Rights Committee and U.S. practice in recent years, the United States will send a high-level delegation, representing several federal agencies as well as representatives from state and local governments, to present orally the Fourth Periodic Report and answer questions from the Committee on March 13-14, 2014, at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland.

This presentation will be open to the public and should also be webcasted on <http://www.treatybodywebcast.org>, a service sponsored by a group of non-governmental organizations. The Committee will issue “Concluding Observations” on the U.S. report with recommendations for future action on or about March 26, which will be posted on the *U.S. Treaty Reports* website.

2. August 2014: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

The CERD, which the United States ratified in 1994, requires each State Party to “pursue by all appropriate means ... a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms,” including by ensuring that all public authorities do not engage in racial discrimination and by reviewing and amending laws and policies that have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination. States Parties are also required to prohibit racial discrimination in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in areas such as equal treatment before courts, voting rights, employment, housing, medical care, and education.

In June 2013, the United States submitted its most recent periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination detailing the implementation of U.S. obligations under the CERD. This report is also available on the *U.S. Treaty Reports* website, under the CERD heading. The U.S. presentation of this report will occur during the Committee’s August session in Geneva, Switzerland, with the dates tentatively scheduled as August 13-14, 2014.

As with the ICCPR, this presentation will be open to the public and should be webcasted on <http://www.treatybodywebcast.org>. The Committee’s “Concluding Observations” on the U.S. report will also be posted on the *U.S. Treaty Reports* website.

3. November 2014: Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)

The CAT, which the United States ratified in 1994, requires each State Party to “take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction,” as well as to fulfill a number of other obligations, including those pertaining to the investigation of acts of torture, accountability for torture perpetrators, the non-use of statements made as a result of torture as evidence in any proceedings, redress for victims, and education and training regarding torture.

In July 2013, the United States submitted its most recent periodic report to the Committee Against Torture detailing the implementation of U.S. obligations under the CAT. This report is also available on the *U.S. Treaty Reports* website, under the CAT heading. The U.S. presentation of this report will occur during the Committee’s November session in Geneva, Switzerland, with the dates tentatively scheduled as November 12-13, 2014.

As with the ICCPR and CERD, this presentation will be open to the public and should be webcasted on <http://www.treatybodywebcast.org>. The Committee's "Concluding Observations" on the U.S. report will also be posted on the *U.S. Treaty Reports* website.

4. January/April/May 2015: Universal Periodic Review

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was established by the UN General Assembly in 2006 as a process through which the human rights record of every UN Member State 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, etc. The United States is a strong supporter of the UPR process, which provides a unique avenue for the global community to discuss human rights around the world.

The United States submitted its first UPR report in 2010, which is available on the State Department's UPR website: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/upr/>. The United States will submit our second UPR report in January 2015, with our presentation slated for April or May 2015. The focus of our second UPR report and presentation will be on implementation of those recommendations the United States accepted during the first UPR process, as well as any other relevant updates on our human rights obligations and commitments.

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