

## UPDATE on US practice in Human Rights

### ***Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2009***

Today, as we mark International Human Rights Day, I am proud to reaffirm America's deep commitment to upholding the inalienable rights of every human being.

America's dedication to advancing the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the bedrock documents of the United Nations, is central to our leadership in the world, and essential to our work at the UN.

In his first days in office, President Obama banned the use of torture, reaffirmed America's commitment to the Geneva Conventions, and ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed. In doing so, the President rejected the false choice between our security and our values and took a significant step toward reestablishing America's leadership on issues of universal human rights.

In March, the United States supported the decision of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for President Bashir of Sudan. We believe it is a vital human rights imperative to hold accountable those responsible for the heinous crimes in Darfur.

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In May, the United States was elected to the UN Human Rights Council. While we recognize that it is a flawed body, we are no longer standing on the sidelines. Instead, we are working from within to strengthen and reform the Human Rights Council and help it live up to its potential. In July, I signed, on behalf of the United States, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first new human rights treaty of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For the nearly 650 million people worldwide living with a disability, there should be no doubt

about America's commitment to equal protection and equal benefits under the law for all citizens.

The United States has also led efforts at the United Nations to promote the rights of women. During our Security Council Presidency in September, we secured the adoption of Resolution 1888 to help spur the international community to take action to end gender-based human rights atrocities. The United States also reversed its previous position and announced its support for a General Assembly declaration condemning human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Just last month, in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, the United States supported resolutions condemning three nations that have egregiously violated the human rights of their citizens – Burma, North Korea and Iran. And for the first time, the United States joined consensus on General Assembly Resolutions on the right to food and the rights of the child.

Today, we rededicate ourselves to the continuing pursuit of human rights and human dignity for all.