

U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY STRATEGY

The National Security Strategy of the United States lists eight demands of human dignity: the rule of law, limits on the absolute power of the state, freedom of speech and freedom of worship, equal justice, respect for women, religious and ethnic tolerance and respect for private property.

The United States is pursuing a broad strategy of promoting respect for human rights that is both appropriate in itself and beneficial for U.S. security. The United States is persuaded that regimes that violate the human rights of their own citizens are more likely to disrupt peace and security in their region and to create a reservoir of ill will that can accrue to the detriment of the United States. The best guarantor of security and prosperity at home and abroad is respect for individual liberty and protection of human rights through good governance and the rule of law. The United States pursues this policy through bilateral and multilateral avenues.

For decades, the United States has placed significant emphasis on respect for human rights in our bilateral relationships. The “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” the “Report in International Religious Freedom” and the “Trafficking in Persons Report” detail the state of human rights in countries around the world, and serve as the guide for diplomatic and programmatic efforts to end them. President Bush, Secretary of State Powell and other senior officials regularly communicate America’s views and values regarding human rights in meetings and other direct communications with foreign leaders. Senior officials also engage in constant diplomatic efforts to remedy abuses, including in some extreme cases by using sanctions and other authorities in the law. Our words are matched by action through programmatic efforts by the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. In the Bush administration, these efforts have been given new dimensions through the Millennium Challenge Account and the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative, and by tripling the State Department’s Human Rights and Democracy Fund and the proposed doubling of funding for the National Endowment for Democracy.

In June 2000, a new multilateral effort was launched when the United States joined with other democratic countries in Warsaw, Poland to launch the Community of Democracies (CD). Since then, the United States has begun discussing the formation of a democracy caucus in the United Nations with interested members of the CD in Washington, New York and Geneva. The United States envisions this as a group of like-minded countries that would coordinate more closely in multilateral settings to advance goals consistent with democratic values. It will also help to garner broader support for UN resolutions that are consistent with democratic objectives. The United States has held a series of meetings and garnered strong support for the formation of such a caucus.

The UN Commission on Human Rights is the world’s forum for the discussion of human rights, and the United States has been a member of the Commission for all but one year of its existence. The UN General Assembly also provides an excellent opportunity for the United States to promote democratic ideals, respect for human rights and good governance by supporting strong, accurate human rights resolutions.