

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release
2011/1653

October 1, 2011

FACT SHEET

Key U.S. Accomplishments at the UN Human Rights Council 18th Session

The eighteenth session of the Human Rights Council came to an end in Geneva on September 30, 2011. This was the seventh regular session since the United States joined in September 2009. Though much work remains, in particular ending the Council's disproportionate focus on Israel, U.S. engagement thus far has resulted in significant improvements to the Human Rights Council as a multilateral forum for promoting and protecting human rights. Accomplishments include groundbreaking resolutions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, preventing discrimination against women, LGBT human rights, religious tolerance, and the creation of monitoring mechanisms for Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Iran, and Syria. Key accomplishments at this session include:

Sudan: The United States worked with the Africa Group on a consensus resolution that renews the mandate of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan for one year, expresses international concern at the humanitarian situations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and calls upon all parties to immediately end violence and halt clashes. The United States underlined our core message regularly during the session: we are deeply concerned about ongoing reports of human rights violations and abuses, including unlawful killing and other violence with impunity, arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists, and restrictions on freedom of assembly. In Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, where there are credible allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity, the United States will continue to support an independent and credible investigation to hold those responsible to account.

South Sudan: The United States joined South Sudan and the Africa Group on a consensus resolution that welcomes South Sudan as a new State and member of the United Nations and also welcomes the government's commitment to strengthen national human rights mechanisms. The resolution calls upon the government to strengthen ongoing cooperation with the UN Mission in South Sudan on human rights issues, and also invites the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist the new government.

Libya: The United States worked closely with Morocco, Libya, and others on a consensus resolution that recommends the UN General Assembly lift Libya's suspension from the Human Rights Council. The resolution also welcomes the commitments made by the new Libyan government to uphold its obligations under international human rights law and to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the international Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council at the February 2011 Special Session on Libya.

Yemen: The United States worked with delegations from Yemen and the Netherlands, as well as others on a consensus resolution that calls for a rapid political transition and transfer of power, as outlined in the plan drawn up by the Gulf Cooperation Council, and condemns ongoing violations of human rights in Yemen. The resolution notes the Yemeni government's announcement to launch transparent and independent investigations, which will adhere to their international obligations. The resolution also calls upon the Government of Yemen and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a framework for dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights.

Syria: At an interactive dialogue on Syria, the United States welcomed the prompt formation of the Commission of Inquiry mandated at the August 2011 Special Session on Syria. The U.S. government called on the Syrian authorities to allow the Commission of Inquiry, international humanitarian agencies, and international media unrestricted access to report on the abhorrent conditions inside Syria. The United States called on the Assad regime to step aside, and to stop killing and torturing the Syrian people immediately.

Israeli/Palestinian Issues: The United States continues to believe the disproportionate focus on Israel diminishes the credibility and effectiveness of the Council. The United States continues to strongly oppose the permanent agenda item devoted to Israel-related issues, which is the only agenda item devoted to a specific country. There were no resolutions under the Israel-specific agenda item at this session.

Fighting Racism: The United States worked with Brazil to co-sponsor a consensus resolution that urged States to fight against racism and strengthen democracy. The United States is committed to working with our global partners, both bilaterally and multilaterally, in the fight against racism and racial discrimination. The United States also recognized the importance of tolerance and reconciliation, citing the powerful example of Nelson Mandela, as tools in the effort to foster more just, tolerant, and equal societies.

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