

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS / 12.10.13

Today is International Human Rights Day – the perfect time to reflect on where the United States stands on critical human rights treaties. In the past, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights has worked to ratify four treaties – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide – and is currently working to promote the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**CRPD**) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**), though there are a number of other international human rights instruments. Here are four that the United States have ratified, four that have been signed (but not yet ratified), and two that haven't even been signed:

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (**ICCPR**) – **United States signed in 1977, and ratified in 1992**

- The ICCPR obligates countries who have ratified the treaty to protect and preserve basic human rights such as the right to life and to human dignity, equality before the law, freedom of speech, assembly and association, religious freedom and privacy, freedom from torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary detention, gender equality, fair trial and minority rights. (via **ACLU**)

2. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (**CERD**) – **United States signed in 1966, and ratified in 1994**

- CERD is designed to protect individuals and groups from discrimination based on race, whether the discrimination is intentional or is the result of seemingly neutral policies. The United States is bound by all provisions of the treaty, which includes a periodic compliance review conducted by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. (via **US Human Rights Network**)

3. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (**CAT**) – **United States signed in 1988, and ratified in 1994**

- This United Nations Convention was designed to safeguard the human rights of citizens by protecting them from torture. It came into force June 26, 1987 and established the UN Committee Against Torture, which monitors implementation of the Convention in each State. Although the United States ratified the Convention, it took a reservation to Article 16, the definition of torture, and instead looks to the 8th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution for legal guidance. (via **Council on Foreign Relations**)

4. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of **Genocide** – **United States signed in 1948, and ratified in 1988**

- On December 9, 1948, in the shadow of the Holocaust, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This convention establishes “genocide” as an international crime, which signatory nations “undertake to prevent and punish.” (via **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum**)

5. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**CRPD**) – **United States signed in 2009, but has not yet ratified (failed to ratify by five votes in December 2012)**

- CRPD was inspired by U.S. leadership in recognizing the rights of people with disabilities. The CRPD is a vital framework for creating legislation and policies around the world that embrace the rights and dignity of all people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was the model for the CRPD, which values of independence and respect and concept of reasonable accommodation are echoed throughout the treaty. (via **USICD**)

6. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) – **United States signed in 1980, but has not yet ratified**

- CEDAW is the most comprehensive and detailed international agreement which seeks the advancement of women. It establishes rights for women in areas not previously subject to international standards. The treaty provides a universal definition of discrimination against women so that those who would discriminate on the basis of sex can no longer claim that no clear definition exists. The United States is one of only seven countries of the world – the others being Iran, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Palau and Tonga – that have yet to ratify the treaty. (via **Feminist Majority**)

7. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (**CESCR**) – **United States signed in 1977, but has not yet ratified**

- Nearly every country in the world is party to this legally binding treaty that guarantees rights, which include rights at work, the right to education, cultural rights of minorities and Indigenous Peoples, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to adequate housing, the right to food, and the right to water. (via **Amnesty International**)

8. Convention on the Rights of the Child (**CRC**) – **United States signed in 1995, but has not yet ratified**

- On November 20, 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **CRC**, a landmark for human rights, which for the first time sought to address the particular needs of children and to set minimum standards for the protection of their rights. It is the first international treaty to guarantee civil and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights. The CRC is the most widely accepted human rights treaty – of all the United Nations member states, only the United States and Somalia have not ratified it. (via **Amnesty International**)

9. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (**CMW**) – **United States has not signed or ratified**

- The Convention recognizes the human rights of migrant workers and promotes their access to justice as well as to humane and lawful working and living conditions. It provides guidance on the elaboration of national migration policies and for international cooperation based on respect for human rights and the rule of law. It sets out provisions to combat abuse and exploitation of migrant workers and members of their families throughout the migration process. (via **migrantrights.org**)

10. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (**CED**) – **United States has not signed or ratified**

- The Convention obliges states to hold any person involved in an enforced disappearance criminally responsible. It recognizes the families' rights to know the truth about the fate of a disappeared person and to obtain reparations. It also requires states to institute stringent safeguards for people deprived of their liberty; to search for the disappeared person and, if they have died, to locate, respect and return the remains. (via **Amnesty International**)



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