

September 28, 2026

Mr. Volker Türk
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Via e-mail: ohchr-hrcouncil@un.org; ohchr-hrcngo@un.org

RE: U.S. Civil Society Requesting Urgent Action on U.S. Non-cooperation with the UPR

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned representatives of civil society organizations in the United States, condemn the U.S. for its persistent non-cooperation with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, and urge you and your office to take meaningful action within your mandate to prevent the attempted dismantling of the universality of a core pillar of the UN Human Rights Council. The U.S.' withdrawal from the UPR, which is a deliberate attack on the mechanism, should be understood in the context of the Trump administration's consistent disregard for the rule of law and accountability, and disdain for the United Nations' human rights system and multilateralism more generally. Such concerted efforts by the U.S. to avoid peer review of systemic and acute human rights violations not only has immediate consequences for targeted individuals and communities, but also reinforces impunity and profoundly undermines human rights protections worldwide.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights must take concrete action to preserve the universality of the UPR and develop a principled approach that will prevent further evasion of this crucial peer review accountability process by member states. Moreover, all relevant UN entities must respond to the present effort of the U.S. to reject participation in the UPR with increased scrutiny to reinforce for all states that they cannot evade peer evaluation of their human rights record.

In the last two years, while the U.S. administration has withdrawn from the UN Human Rights Council and the UPR process, human rights advocates, community-based organizations, and civil society actors across the U.S. have documented a severe degradation of human rights in the country. Civil society submitted a record 155 stakeholder reports to inform the UPR process in 2025, prior to the U.S.' disengagement, of which 60 were updated in April 2026 on the dangerous escalation of violations committed by the U.S. in the past year. Such documentation, and particularly the testimonies of impacted people through reports and additional public briefings including the People's UPR in October 2025, creates a robust historical record for your office and must inform the urgency and scope of your intervention. Furthermore, several UN special procedures, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the High Commissioner for Human Rights have raised serious concerns related to human rights violations in the United States. Their concerns and communications were ignored by the current U.S. government.

The reports and updates draw international attention to the administration's failure to protect the rights of Indigenous communities; the mass and illegal detention and deportation scheme that violates the human rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees; the extrajudicial killings of over 223 people in the Caribbean and East Pacific in the name of countering "narcoterrorism"; the systemic injustices of the criminal legal system, including the practice of forced prison labor and extreme sentences such as death by incarceration; the dismantling of voting rights; historic funding cuts and restructuring of public health coverage and nutrition assistance programs that undermine access to adequate food and lifesaving healthcare; water injustices and denial of food sovereignty as a manifestation of environmental racism; U.S. complicity in advancing or committing violations of domestic and international law in Gaza including via the ongoing transfer of arms; the regression on reproductive rights and bodily autonomy; and the criminalization of homelessness and poverty. At the same time, the Trump administration is engaged in a dramatic crackdown on civil society organizations that are politically disfavored precisely for human rights advocacy, and is actively seeking to eliminate or upend programs designed to address structural racism and discrimination against minoritized and racialized groups. Civil society is particularly concerned with the Trump administration's expansion of the "terrorism" framework and vast surveillance infrastructure used to repress expression dissent, target civil society and marginalized communities and chill human rights work.

In this critical moment, and the global impact of policies and actions taken by the U.S. government, all stakeholders must act in the fullest extent of their authority. Specifically, we request that you:

1. Recommend the appointment of a Special Rapporteur, Commission of Inquiry or Fact-Finding body to ensure a comprehensive contemporaneous record and documentation of human rights violations in the United States and offer victims alternative pathways for documentation and analysis of human rights harms and preservation of opportunities for accountability and justice;
2. Conduct an intersessional briefing on the United States between the 63rd and 64th session of the Human Rights Council;
3. Issue an independent report on the human rights crisis in the United States and the global impact of its non-cooperation with UN accountability mechanisms;
4. Undertake a visit to the United States to engage communities impacted by U.S. policies and practices, and coordinate with UN special procedures to prioritize the monitoring and documenting of human rights violations in the United States.

Despite real risk of retaliation and retribution, the undersigned civil society organizations reaffirm our commitment to universal human rights and are prepared to engage in every international effort to hold our government accountable and to achieve justice, safety and flourishing of our communities.

Sincerely,

Afghan Legal Empowerment Portal
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American Friends Service Committee
Artistic Freedom Initiative
CEDAW Rising
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Global Law & Justice,
Northeastern School of Law
Center for Victims of Torture
Children's Rights
CIVICUS
Community Justice Project
Council for Global Equality
CPIC NOW
Desiree Alliance
Earth Neighborhood Productions
Equality Now
Florida Coalition to Advance Racial Equity
Gender Justice Clinic at Cornell Law School
Global Justice Center
Global Rights Advocacy
Growing Hope
Guttmacher Institute
Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic
Human Rights at Home Litigation Clinic at
Saint Louis University School of Law
Human Rights Cities Alliance
Human Rights First
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive
Justice
International Association of Charities (AIC)
International Human Rights Clinic, Santa
Clara University School of Law
Ipas US
Just Ground

Malcolm X Center for Self Determination
Met Council on Housing Research and
Education Fund
Muslim Advocates
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Homelessness Law Center
National Lawyers Guild - International
Committee
Native Justice, LLC
Physicians for Human Rights
Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance
Project South
Reproductive Justice Action Collective
(ReJAC)
Rhode Island Food Policy Council
Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights
Center
Safe Space Fort Smith
Santa Clara Law - International Human
Rights Clinic
Sisters of Charity Federation
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Taxpayers Against Genocide
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Alliance for Diplomacy and Justice
The Southern Poverty Law Center
Transcending Women
University Network for Human Rights
University of Miami School of Law
Human Rights Clinic
Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics
and Agriculture (WANDA)
Women's All Points Bulletin (WAPB)
Woodhull Freedom Foundation

