
Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1996

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor U.S. Department of State

[The following material has been extracted from the annual State Department report to the Congress, title as above, dated 30 January 1997. This year's report describes human rights practices in 194 countries, and is available for purchase from the Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, D.C. 20402-9328, telephone (703) 512-1800. The report is also available on the internet through the State Department home page: (<http://www.state.gov/index.html>). The excerpts which follow discuss the statutory requirements for the reports, the method of data collection and compilation, and a general overview of human rights conditions as they existed in 1996 throughout the world.]

PREFACE

1996 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

WHY THE REPORTS ARE PREPARED

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with sections 116(d) and 502(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended, and section 505(c) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended. As stated in section 116(d)(1) of the FAA: "The Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, by January 31 of each year, a full and complete report regarding the status of internationally recognized human rights, within the meaning of subsection (A) in countries that receive assistance under this part, and (B) in all other foreign countries which are members of the United Nations and which are not otherwise the subject of a human rights report under this Act." We have also included reports on several countries that do not fall into the categories established by these statutes and that are thus not covered by the congressional requirement.

The responsibility of the United States to speak out on behalf of international human rights standards was formalized in the early 1970's. In 1976 Congress enacted legislation creating a Coordinator of Human Rights in the U.S. Department of State, a position later upgraded to Assistant Secretary. In 1994 the Congress created a position of Senior Advisor for Women's Rights. Congress has also written into law formal requirements that U.S. foreign and trade policy take into account countries' human rights and worker rights performance and that country reports be submitted to the Congress on an annual basis. The first reports, in 1977, covered only countries receiving U.S. aid, numbering 82; this year 194 reports are submitted.

HOW THE REPORTS ARE PREPARED

In August 1993, the Secretary of State moved to strengthen further the human rights efforts of our embassies. All sections in each embassy were asked to contribute information and to corroborate reports of human rights violations, and new efforts were made to link mission programming to the advancement of human rights and democracy. In 1994 the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs was reorganized and renamed as the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, reflecting both a broader sweep and a more focused

approach to the interlocking issues of human rights, worker rights, and democracy. The 1996 human rights reports reflect a year of dedicated effort by hundreds of State Department, Foreign Service, and other U.S. Government employees.

Our embassies, which prepared the initial drafts of the reports, gathered information throughout the year from a variety of sources across the political spectrum, including government officials, jurists, military sources, journalists, human rights monitors, academics, and labor activists. This information-gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service Officers regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuse, monitor elections, and come to the aid of individuals at risk, such as political dissidents and human rights defenders whose rights are threatened by their governments.

After the embassies completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, in cooperation with other State Department offices. As they worked to corroborate, analyze, and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own sources of information. These included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, and experts from academia and the media. Officers also consulted with experts on worker rights issues, refugee issues, military and police matters, women's issues, and legal matters. The guiding principle was to ensure that all relevant information was assessed as objectively, thoroughly, and fairly as possible.

The reports in this volume will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy, and making assistance, training, and other resource allocations. They will also serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights.

The Country Reports on Human Rights Practices cover internationally recognized individual, civil, political, and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights include freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; from prolonged detention without charges; from disappearance due to abduction or clandestine detention; and from other flagrant violations of the right to life, liberty, and the security of the person.

Universal human rights aim to incorporate respect for human dignity into the processes of government and law. All people have the inalienable right to change their government by peaceful means and to enjoy basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression, association, assembly, movement, and religion, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or sex. The right to join a free trade union is a necessary condition of a free society and economy. Thus the reports assess key internationally recognized worker rights, including the right of association; the right to organize and bargain collectively; prohibition of forced or compulsory labor; minimum age for employment of children; and acceptable work conditions.

OVERVIEW

THE GLOBAL STRUCTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Half a century ago the building of a global structure of human rights protection was given special urgency by the unprecedented horrors of the Holocaust, of World War II, and of modern totalitarianism. So it was that the close of the war was followed by the Nuremberg Tribunals and the adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This effort has continued to the present day, and while it was given special impetus by the tragic events of our century, its foundations lie deep in the moral values of all humanity and the experience of oppressed people throughout history.

Throughout history, whenever fundamental human values have been assaulted by governments and their leaders, the result has come at horrific human and moral cost. That is what happened over the centuries, in every part of the world, including North America. And that is what happened in this century in the Armenian massacres, in the Nazi concentration camps, in the Soviet Gulag, in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, in the apartheid society of South Africa, in the killing fields of Cambodia, and more recently in the acts of genocide carried out in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Burundi. These and other massive human horrors, past and present, are a standing affront to civilization and all it stands for.

The idea of universal human rights and the measures taken to bring those ideas to life are the measure of these horrors and of the commitment of modern civilization not to repeat them. The evolving legal and political structure of human rights is a framework within which nations and governments seek to honor this commitment. It is, of course, a work in progress, and it is in many ways the most important work of governments and their citizens.

A broad consensus has been, and is, steadily emerging against such fundamental abuses of human beings as genocide, extrajudicial killings, torture, enslavement, sexual violence, the forced separation of families, the destruction of religion, and the suppression of thought and speech. Even those who engage in these practices rarely seek to justify their actions outright.

Contemporary disparagements of human rights take several forms. Some dismiss the very notion that there is an international consensus to support them, an argument belied by the deep striving for justice and dignity evidenced throughout history on every continent by people of goodwill. Others argue, for example, that there is no room for civil and political rights until economic development has been achieved, and even then, that such rights as free speech and association get in the way of economic well-being and social stability.

To the contrary, respect for human rights, free expression, the rule of law, and equal rights for all men and women serve to stabilize societies and the international community in the long term, and have a substantial and meaningful role to play in economic development in this burgeoning age of globalization and information technology. That was the position adopted by delegates to the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, who unequivocally declared that: "While development facilitates the enjoyment of human rights, the lack of development may not be invoked to justify the abridgement of internationally-recognized human rights."

Indeed, it is now well established that the ultimate economic crisis—famine and mass starvation—is not occurring at the end of the 20th century in those countries whose rulers bear the consequences of their decisions, whose people participate in their own governance, and in which information freely circulates; that governments accountable to their citizens and to international law will be less prone to conflict and aggression; that the rule of law offers a solid ground for economic investment; and that civil society, fostered by freedom of asso-

ciation, supports the networks of social solidarity that are essential to successful, stable, long-term development.

While these truths are increasingly evident to vast numbers of people around the globe—indeed, the global movement for human rights is one of the most extraordinary political developments in modern history—they are still, sadly, far from being realized in many countries.

The greatest works of the human spirit take a long time to come into being, and they must be constantly nurtured lest they collapse, with horrific results. In particular, the evolving global network of laws and institutions protecting and promoting human rights has taken a long time, but its roots lie deep in the hopes, aspirations, and beliefs in human dignity of all cultures and societies.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD

We have left the Cold War period in which human rights issues served as an ideological battleground. We have entered a period in which totalitarianism has been thoroughly discredited, and in which economies and societies around the world are afforded increased opportunities for integration and cooperation, due in large part to new technologies, as well as the passing of the Cold War, which divided much of the world into opposing blocs. Today, human rights concerns are increasingly incorporated into bilateral relations among countries, including with friends, and these efforts can be part of a genuine dialog among nations on the shape of the societies we hope to foster in the next century.

There are also greater opportunities for multilateral cooperation as the relationship between human rights, democracy, and development is becoming better understood, and we see greater strength and involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) in pressing for human rights and democracy in all parts of the world. The extraordinary activity and effectiveness of the NGO conference parallel to 1995's U.N. Conference on Women was a striking demonstration of this phenomenon.

Yet despite this promising situation, there is a yawning gap between the possibilities that these positive developments seem to present and the realities of a world in which there often seem to be more conflicts and human rights abuses than ever. Among the problems we are seeing are terrible ethnic and religious conflicts exploited by cynical leaders, refugee movements, and the persistence of authoritarianism in too many countries.

One way in which the international community is increasingly responding to this challenge is by fostering new institutions of justice, accountability, democracy, and civil society.

In particular, a series of new means and mechanisms of accountability have appeared in recent years in countries around the world, with institutions such as the National Truth Commissions of El Salvador, Haiti, and South Africa and National Human Rights Commissions in India, Indonesia, and Mexico. Meanwhile, regional bodies like the Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are deepening and broadening their human rights efforts and capabilities.

At the international level the most significant and promising of the institutions are the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, which may herald a new era of international justice and pave the way for an International Criminal Court to bring to the bar of justice perpetrators of crimes against humanity throughout the world. The characterization of rape as a prosecutable war crime is another notable feature of the Tribunals' work. In addition, the Dayton Peace Agreement provides a case-in-point of how human rights

and justice institutions can be synthesized with military intervention and other multilateral actions to effect a major effort of conflict resolution.

We are also witnessing the development of quasi-international human rights institutions. Nowhere is this more evident than in the former Yugoslavia, which witnessed the development in 1996 of both the Commission on Human Rights for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the International Commission on Missing Persons in the Former Yugoslavia.

Created by states, managed by international human rights and humanitarian affairs experts, funded by the international community and yet having legal character under domestic law, these institutions represent creative attempts to forge new structures capable of protecting human rights and advancing humanitarian interests in the trying new circumstances of post-Cold War conflict.

AUTHORITARIAN REPRESSION

In 1996 patterns of repression and systemic human rights abuse continued in many countries, including some of the world's largest and most influential.

In China, where Marxist ideology has in recent years given way to economic pragmatism and increasingly robust ties of trade and commerce with the United States and many other countries, human rights abuses by a strong central Government persist in the face of legal reform efforts and economic and social change.

The Chinese Government in 1996 continued to commit widespread and well-documented human rights abuses, in violation of internationally accepted norms, stemming from the authorities' intolerance of dissent, fear of unrest, and the continuing absence of laws protecting basic freedoms. All public dissent against party and government was effectively silenced by intimidation, exile, or the imposition of prison terms, administrative detention, or house arrest. No dissidents were known to be active at year's end. Abuses included torture and mistreatment of prisoners, forced confessions, and arbitrary and lengthy incommunicado detention. Severe restrictions were also continued on freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, religion, privacy (including coercive family planning), and worker rights. In minority areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang, controls on religion and other fundamental freedoms intensified. During 1996, Hong Kong's civil liberties and political institutions were threatened by restrictive measures taken by the Chinese Government in anticipation of Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty in July of 1997.

In Nigeria the military council headed by General Sani Abacha, which seized power in 1993, remains in control, and its human rights performance remains dismal. Throughout the year General Abacha's Government regularly relied on arbitrary detention, arrests, and wide-scale harassment to silence its many critics. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings, tortured and beat suspects and detainees; prison conditions remained life threatening; and security officials continued routinely to harass human rights and democracy activists, labor leaders, environmentalists, and journalists. Nonparty local elections held in March were nullified by the Government, and numerous parliamentarians remain in jail. All these abuses occurred in a climate of infringements of freedom of speech, assembly, association, travel, and workers rights.

Cuba remains a totalitarian anachronism, where human rights deteriorated in 1996, and suppression of dissent worsened.

Despite formally ending Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest, the military regime in Burma stepped up its "rolling repression" and systematic violation of human rights. North Korea remains an outpost of totalitarian rule.

After more than two decades in power, the Ba'athist regime exercises absolute dictatorial authority in Iraq. Elsewhere in the Middle East, repressive regimes in Iran, Syria, and Libya are responsible for the systematic denial of their citizens' basic human rights.

COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION

The extraordinary democratic revolution of the past decade is as yet unfinished. In many countries, democracy is still fragile, civil-military relations are not properly defined, elections are subject to manipulation, women cannot fully participate, and the institutions of justice and civil society that guarantee human rights over the long term have not yet fully emerged.

The picture in Russia is mixed. It continues to undergo profound transformations as its as yet unfinished democratic institutions and practices continue to evolve. July 1996 saw Russia's first-ever presidential election, and in December 1995 its second multiparty parliamentary elections. Human rights NGO's were generally free to operate. However, prison conditions—always harsh—have worsened, and lengthy pretrial detention continued. Violent hazing of military conscripts sparked new protests.

The major Russian media have functioned relatively unhindered and for the most part have reported freely on the Chechen conflict despite government pressure and heavy-handed treatment by Russian troops in the war zone. In addition, journalists throughout Russia covering controversial issues were subjected to pressure, physical violence, and even death, while the Government appeared unresponsive to requests for investigation of these cases. Legal reform has proceeded unevenly in the absence of the approval of key pieces of implementing legislation. The development of an independent judiciary continues but slowed considerably, and judges were often subject to manipulation by political authorities. Discrimination against minorities remains a problem, and discrimination against women in some sectors has intensified in recent years.

One genuine bright spot at year's end was the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya, where conflict had claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoyed a year of comparative peace in 1996 as implementation of the 1995 Dayton Accords proceeded. The September elections for major offices were, despite their shortcomings, an important step in solidifying the foundations of peace and establishing representative institutions.

The largest challenge facing Bosnia has been to overcome the staggering effects of 3 years of warfare. In 1996 the international community sought to promote reconciliation. Yet political authorities continued, in varying degrees, to violate basic human rights. Members of the security forces mistreated citizens. Judicial institutions did not function effectively, freedom of movement was restricted, refugees were not able to return to their homes, freedom of the press and expression were curtailed, and ethnic discrimination was widespread. In the Serb entity and the Croat parts of the Federation, war criminals remained at large.

At year's end, the Serbian Government's blatant efforts to manipulate the results of the November 17 municipal elections had the effect of invigorating democratic forces, who were mounting the most serious challenge yet faced by the current regime.

Serious backsliding occurred in Belarus, where the President conducted a constitutional referendum, generally regarded by the international community as illegitimate, and subsequently replaced the Parliament with a rubber-stamp legislature while extending his own term. Progress toward democracy was set back by flawed elections in Armenia and fraudulent elections in Albania. Presidential power has grown in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to the point where the executive overshadows the legislature and the judiciary, while Uzbekistan—and to a greater extent Turkmenistan and Tajikistan—lag even further behind in the development of democracy and respect for human rights.

There was marked progress in Guatemala, where a peace accord between the Government and guerrillas ended a 36-year civil war. Some serious abuses did continue, although the Government demonstrated the political will to combat impunity, and courts have, in marked contrast to past years, convicted some members of the security services.

Haiti continued the democratic advances begun in 1994, although abuses and the poor condition of its judicial system remain issues of concern.

In the Middle East, the peace process suffered setbacks in 1996, which had negative effects on human rights in both the Occupied Territories and the areas administered by the Palestinian Authority. Terrorist acts had a deeply chilling effect on both diplomacy and human rights observance. The successful completion of elections for the Palestinian Council in March of 1996 marked a significant step in the development of Palestinian institutions; and there was some progress towards year's end in the easing of some aspects of Israel's closure of the Territories, in increased cooperation on the ground between Israeli and Palestinian authorities, and in the talks on Israeli redeployment within Hebron, which then reached a successful conclusion in January of 1997.

While Indonesia exhibits a surface adherence to democratic forms, its political system remains strongly authoritarian. The President, his associates, and the military still dominate the country and maintain an ideological program of social cohesion through the restriction of opposition, the repression of independent labor unions, the stifling of dissent, and other harsh measures. In the regions of Irian Jaya and East Timor, the human rights climate is particularly harsh. Freedoms of assembly and association were curtailed in 1996 through arrests, surveillance, and other forms of intimidation. One positive development was the Government's tolerance of a National Human Rights Commission.

Some militaries continue to resist civilian, democratic oversight, as in Colombia, where entrenched conflict among security forces, guerrillas, paramilitaries, and narcotics traffickers has resulted in a climate of both abuse and impunity.

In some countries, such as Egypt and Turkey, campaigns against extremists have resulted in abuses, including torture.

RELIGION

A disturbing aspect of the post-Cold War world has been the persistence, and in some cases the intensification, of religious intolerance, religious persecution, and the exploitation of religious and ethnic differences for narrow and violent ends. In 1996 many religious groups around the world continued to face persecution and other difficulties in practicing their faiths and maintaining their cultural loyalties.

In China the Government intensified its policy of severely restricting and bringing under official control all religious groups, including Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists.

Christians are subject to difficulties ranging from interference to outright persecution in many countries, including Iraq, Pakistan, and the Sudan. In Cuba persecution continues, despite the easing of some of the harsher measures.

Non-Muslims are prohibited from public worship in Saudi Arabia, while elsewhere in the Middle East anti-Semitic materials regularly appear in government-controlled media. The Government of Iran continued its repressive practices against members of the Baha'i faith. In Vietnam both Buddhists and Christians suffer from government restrictions.

Religious groups and figures are playing increasingly significant roles in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in efforts at reconciliation among antagonistic groups, in fostering the peaceful evolution of civil society, and in respect for human rights.

These initiatives have taken a variety of forms, including peace activism, mediation, education for tolerance and nonviolence, and creating models of coexistence. In 1996 religious leaders and groups played an important peacemaking role in virtually every region, from Northern Ireland to Nicaragua to South Africa to Cambodia. Religious leaders such as the Pope, the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Tutu of South Africa, Bishop Belo of East Timor, and Maha Gosananda of Cambodia are engaged in efforts at mediation and the promotion of tolerance and human rights.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

In the wake of the resoundingly successful U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September of 1995, the year 1996 saw a tremendous increase in activity towards the protection and promotion of the human rights of women. Some governments have fulfilled obligations undertaken at the Conference and taken progressive actions to secure rights for women. Meanwhile, women's NGO's around the world have led the way, stepping up their activities, pressing governments for change, and providing new and creative services for women. The Conference's call to action and the resulting government and NGO activity is having a profound effect on democracy and economic development around the world.

Among the efforts underway are the development of legislation on family law in Namibia, on violence against women in Ecuador, and on women's political participation in the Philippines. Programs are being created for the economic and educational empowerment of women and for the prevention of sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls.

Alongside these gains, however, women all over the world continued in 1996 to encounter barriers of widespread political, economic, and social discrimination, often codified in law. Women are often strongly discouraged and prevented from participating in political life, are disproportionately poor, are denied the right to privacy, and face serious impediments to participating in economic life. In addition, laws meant to protect the human rights of women often go unenforced.

Discrimination reached new heights of severity in Afghanistan with the rise to power of the Taliban.

Violence against women, both in and outside the home, a particularly widespread and entrenched violation of women's rights, is either legally permitted or simply allowed to continue in many countries and is by no means restricted to the developing world. In a number of countries, the continued practice of female genital mutilation is a particularly egregious form of violence against women. Rape has been a particularly cruel tool of warfare in a number of conflicts. Despite the enormous strides of recent years, there is much that remains to be done.

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Children are perhaps the least represented members of society in the councils of government and among the most helpless victims of human rights abuse and other forms of political violence.

An estimated quarter of a million children, even as young as age five, have been conscripted to serve as soldiers in dozens of armed conflicts around the world, some with armed insurgencies, such as the Khmer Rouge, the Shining Path of Peru, and Palestinian groups in Lebanon, and some in regular armies, such as those of Cambodia, Uganda, Angola, and Sudan.

In Liberia, for example, children have been the greatest victims of the civil war, as education and nurture have been completely disrupted, while children have been recruited into the various warring factions.

But children suffer human rights abuse in contexts outside of conflict. Millions of children go uneducated and uncared for, and the so-called street children of the major cities find themselves caught in lives of crime and drug dependency and subject to harsh police measures. In a number of countries, incarcerated children suffer intolerable prison conditions.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children—through child prostitution, child pornography, and trafficking in children—is all too frequent in both developed and developing countries. The World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in August 1996, brought new attention to the problem and urged states and societies to take action against these abuses.

WORKER RIGHTS AND CHILD LABOR

Failure to respect basic worker rights as defined in several key International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions continues to be a problem in many countries. These core worker rights include freedom of association, which is the foundation on which workers can form trade unions and defend their interests; the right to organize and bargain collectively; freedom from discrimination in employment; and freedom from child and forced labor.

Despite broad international recognition of these principles, free trade unions continue to be banned or suppressed in many countries; in many more, restrictions on freedom of association range from outright state control to legislation aimed at frustrating workers' legitimate efforts to organize. In 1996 the ILO criticized Nigeria, Indonesia, and Burma specifically, as well as a number of other countries for such practices. The ILO also repeated its call to Burma to cease its forced labor practices.

The relationships between worker rights and trade were the focus of discussion in a variety of international forums. The first ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization held in Singapore in December adopted a declaration that renewed the WTO's "commitment to the observance of internationally recognized worker rights," and stated that, "we believe that economic growth and development fostered by increased trade and further trade liberalization contribute to the promotion of those standards."

International focus on child labor intensified in 1996 in the ILO and other multilateral bodies. Consumers in developed countries have taken new notice of the issue, and this has had some effect on the acceptability of child labor in export-oriented countries. Nevertheless, the phenomenon continues, not only in developing countries but in some industrialized countries as

well, with the overwhelming majority of child laborers in countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

REFUGEES

Refugees are particularly vulnerable groups and at risk of human rights abuses. Although the human rights of refugees—especially women and children—are protected by international law, those rights are sometimes violated by the very governments to whom they have turned for protection.

These Country Reports for 1996 include specific information on the treatment of refugees and those who seek “first asylum.” Although many nations treat these groups well, many other countries fail to provide meaningful protection to refugees and first asylum seekers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let us remember on whose behalf we labor in the field of human rights and on whose behalf a global structure of protection is being built. This structure belongs to all of us, and it is being built for all of humanity. In building this structure the world is responding to the pain and need of men and women and children on all continents and to the historical conscience of mankind.

To those who dismiss those efforts as a form of cultural imperialism, let me offer in response the voices of indigenous NGO's working throughout the world to advance the cause of human rights. A powerful example is the presence of 110 NGO's from the Asia-Pacific region, which, meeting in Bangkok in 1993, sent the following message to the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna:

“We can learn from different cultures in a pluralistic perspective . . . to deepen respect for human rights. While we advocate cultural pluralism, those cultural practices which derogate from universally accepted human rights . . . must not be tolerated.”

And let us recall the Declaration agreed to at Vienna in 1993 by all the nations of the world:

“Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings; their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of governments.”

It is true that human rights find their realization in a highly imperfect world. But that does not free us from responsibility to support respect for human rights in the processes of government and law and does not permit us to shirk this responsibility by invoking national sovereignty, or claims of social stability, economic development, or cultural difference.

As we near the dawn of a new century, the international community has an unprecedented opportunity to engage in respectful dialog on how best to promote human rights, freedom, and dignity. Every culture, tradition, and civilization brings its own genius to bear on this monumental effort, and that moral responsibility rests with every man and woman on this planet, calling us to a modern-day pursuit of an age-old quest for justice. In the words of the Talmudic sage Hillel: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself what am I? And if not now, when?”

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