Information Resources Center
U.S. Embassy, Bogota D.C., Colombia

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS 1948-2008

On December 10th, Human Rights Day, the Secretary-General launched a year-long campaign, in which all parts of the United Nations family are taking part in the lead up to the 60th birthday of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on Human Rights Day 2008.

With more than 360 language versions, UN organizations around the globe focus on helping people everywhere to learn about their human rights. The UDHR was the first international recognition of fundamental rights and freedom and it continues to be a living and relevant document today.

This theme for 2008, *"Dignity and justice for all of us,"* reinforces the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a commitment to universal dignity and justice. It is not a luxury or a wish-list. The UDHR and its core values, inherent human dignity, non-discrimination, equality, fairness and universality, apply to everyone, everywhere and always. The Declaration is universal, enduring and vibrant, and it concerns us all.

Since its adoption in 1948, the Declaration has been and continues to be a source of inspiration for national and international efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/udhr60/

BACKGROUND ON HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a bulwark against oppression and discrimination, covering a range of human rights in 30 concise articles. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,.

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations.

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge.

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among

the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.
http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm

THE TEN UDHR ARTICLES

The UDHR remains the foundation of universal protection of the dignity of mankind. Following are the first 10 UDHR articles.

Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6. Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.
Article 9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him. **Taken from** America.gov

COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES

COLOMBIA

Colombia is a constitutional, multiparty democracy with a population of approximately 44.8 million. In May 2006 independent presidential candidate Alvaro Uribe was reelected in elections that were considered generally free and fair. The 43-year internal armed conflict continued between the government and terrorist organizations, particularly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). While civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were instances in which elements of the security forces acted in violation of state policy.

Although serious problems remained, the government's respect for human rights continued to improve, which was particularly evident by progress in implementing the Justice and Peace Law. The following societal problems and governmental human rights abuses were reported during the year: unlawful and extrajudicial killings; forced disappearances; insubordinate military collaboration with new illegal groups and paramilitaries who refused to demobilize; torture and mistreatment of detainees; overcrowded and insecure prisons; arbitrary arrest; high number of pretrial detainees, some of whom were held with convicted prisoners; impunity; an inefficient judiciary subject to intimidation; harassment and intimidation of journalists; unhygienic conditions at settlements for displaced persons, with limited access to health care, education, or employment; corruption; harassment of human rights groups; violence against women, including rape; child abuse and child prostitution; trafficking in women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation; societal discrimination against women, indigenous persons, and minorities; and illegal child labor.

The FARC and ELN committed the following human rights abuses: political killings; killings of off-duty members of the public secu-

rity forces and local officials; kidnappings and forced disappearances; massive forced displacements; subornation and intimidation of judges, prosecutors, and witnesses; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of movement; widespread recruitment of child soldiers; attacks against human rights activists; and harassment, intimidation, and killings of teachers and trade unionists.

New illegal groups committed numerous human rights abuses. The last United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) block demobilized in August 2006, but AUC members who refused to demobilize, AUC members who demobilized but later abandoned the peace process, and other criminal groups remained the object of security force action. (The new illegal groups, which the government also described as new criminal groups, consisted of demobilized paramilitaries who returned to violence, individual paramilitaries who never demobilized, common criminals, and narcotics traffickers primarily involved in criminal activity. These new groups lacked the organization, reach, and military capacity of the former AUC and focused primarily on narcotics trafficking and extortion rather than fighting the FARC or ELN. In these circumstances, it was often difficult to determine responsibility for abuses committed.) The AUC demobilization led to a reduction in killings and other human rights abuses, but paramilitaries who refused to demobilize and new criminal groups continued to commit numerous unlawful acts and related abuses, including: political killings and kidnappings; physical violence; forced displacement; subornation and intimidation of judges, prosecutors, and witnesses; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of movement; recruitment and use of child soldiers; and harassment, intimidation, and killings of human rights workers, journalists, teachers, and trade unionists.

Government steps to improve the human rights and security situation showed demonstrable results. Government statistics indicated that during the year there were decreases in massacres (34 percent) and kidnappings (29 percent). The Justice and Peace Law process helped clarify more than 3,000 crimes and led to the exhumation of 1,196 remains in 1,009 mass graves. The Supreme Court and prosecutor general's investigations of links between politicians and paramilitary groups implicated 52 congressman, 11 governors, and 19 mayors, a number of whom were in jail at year's end.

http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100633.htm

Remarks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

At a March 11 press conference marking the public release of the annual 2007 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Rice said:

"In every region of the world, men and women are working peacefully, and often at great risk to themselves and their families, to secure human rights and fundamental freedoms, to follow their consciences and speak their minds without fear, to choose those who would govern them and to hold their leaders accountable and to achieve equal justice under the law. …
"We gather today to support them, and it is our hope that this Human Rights Report will highlight the obstacles that still stand in their way, so that they may bear the mantle of justice at least at less risk to themselves and to their families.

"This document," Rice said*, "is collected and written with the optimism that no corner of the earth is permanently condemned to tyranny."*
http://www.america.gov/st/hr-english/2008/March/20080312114122liameruoy0.1896021.html

HEROES IN THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Around the world, ordinary people are making extraordinary efforts in the fight to protect human rights. Many of them suffer insults, intimidation and worse because of their work, yet they persist in their dedication to promote human freedom. Here are some of their stories.

PROFILES OF THE HEROES

Aissatou Yaou
In Cameroon, Aissatou Yaou is showing women can be good wives and mothers while enjoying professional success in the worlds of government and business. A mother of four and a devout Muslim, Yaou was the first woman to head Cameroon's Ministry of Women's Affairs. When she left the government in 2000, she was also the longest-serving woman, with 16 years in government.

Ausama Monajed

The world must know of the sacrifices being made by Syria's prisoners of conscience, says Ausama Monajed, and even an oath signed to the Syrian regime will not prevent him from telling their stories. The declaration seeks to reinforce commitments made by nations under the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948. Among its 30 articles, the Universal Declaration recognizes that all people have the right to freedom of thought and freedom from unlawful detention.

Raisa Mikhailovskaya
Alyaksandr Kozulin appeared on television and denounced the corruption of the current Belarusian government. Now he sits in prison. His daughter Olga Kozulina and Belarusian writer and film producer Raisa Mikhailovskaya are calling for international help to free him.

Bertha Antunez Pernet
Bertha Antunez Pernet fought for 17 years for the release of her brother, a prisoner of conscience in Cuba. Even after his 2007 release, she continues to fight for the freedom of other Cuban dissidents.

Antunez Pernet recounted the physical torture and psychological torment her brother suffered under the Castro regime.

Gulambek Umarov
Uzbekistan's leaders must "listen to the cries of their long-suffering brothers and sisters, rather than jail them for expressing their despair," says Gulambek Umarov, who seeks the release of his father and all prisoners of conscience. "We implore the world's democratic nations to demand his immediate and unconditional release," Gulambek Umarov said on behalf of himself and his family.

Senait Yohannes
Many who sought political reform in Eritrea are now in jail, says activist Senait Yohannes, whose family members are among thousands of prisoners of conscience imprisoned in Eritrea and around the world. Senait Yohannes is the sister of Aster Yohannes, who is married to Petros Solomon. Aster and her husband have been imprisoned for years for their role in seeking political reform and implementation of the Eritrean constitution. Neither has been heard from since they were taken into custody, and the four children they left behind are being raised by their grandparents, according to Senait.

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