

Human and Civil Rights

Theological/Ethical Background:

The Holy Spirit, which we all share, makes us equal. We differ in our class backgrounds, intelligence, manners, experiences, talents, skin color, language, gender, sexuality, and customs; these differences can serve to remind us of the infinite number of ways the Spirit presents itself. But our differences can also create barriers because of our inability to interpret accurately the actions, motives, and goals of others. This failure to understand lies at the heart of racial and ethnic prejudice, for when we fear the unfamiliar or unknown, we tend to reject and thrust it from us. (NY Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends)

The UN Declaration of Human Rights states:

- No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. (Article 5)
- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his [or her] privacy, home or correspondence, nor to attacks on his [or her] honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks. (Article 12)
- The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. (Article 21)

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- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his [herself and her] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood beyond his [or her] control. (Article 25)

Current Situation:

- US policy of economic/political/cultural domination has sown seeds of both crushing poverty and "terrorism".
- Rising grain prices have led to famine, and with crushing debt, poor nations are unable to intervene.
- The rule of law is compromised by signing statements/politicizing the Justice Department/ignoring laws such as FISA.
- Privacy rights of citizens and human rights of sojourners have been violated.
- The Executive branch repeatedly claims executive privilege and withholds and/or destroys evidence.

What Will Help:

- Reauthorization of FISA must not contain retroactive immunity.
- Pass the Jubilee Act (H.R. 2634 / S. 2166).
- Develop groundwork to hold the Bush Administration civilly and criminally responsible for its unlawful activities.

(4/08)

Member Denominations in New York

American Baptist Churches, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, Religious Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church

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