

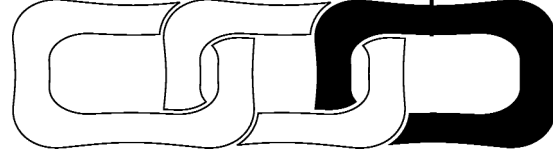
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LINKS



SPECIAL ISSUE

**HUMAN RIGHTS
IN USA**



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HUMAN RIGHTS IN "MARALLY AMBIGUOUS TIMES"

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Ensuring human rights and basic liberties has become a priority for modern states and is currently one of the most significant international commitments considered a prerequisite for full international acceptance. The corresponding range of issues is of great importance to modern societies, and due to this reason it is inevitable that these very issues are often employed for political speculations or used to treat countries unfairly and to apply political pressure. Stereotypes and political prejudices against certain countries are formed on the international field with the help of political technologies, whereas others are granted a nearly infallible status and adopt the stance of self-asserted mentors. Human rights, democracy, and the rights of minorities have become instruments of disintegrating disagreeable countries defying global governance and pretexts for using force against sovereign states which is prohibited by the UN Charter.

Certain major international organizations (the Council of Europe) do not limit their activities to monitoring the human

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rights climate but also promote their interpretations of a number of rights and liberties as universal even though different interpretations may be adopted by various civilizations based on diverse religious and philosophical foundations. Hundreds of human rights groups, some of them well-known and others newly born but still ambitious, produce countless biased and slanted human rights reports concerning various countries. Contrary to the popular opinion, no integrated and comprehensive list of universally recognized criteria on all aspects of human rights and liberties is available. Due to this shortcoming there is an ample opportunity for discriminatory use of the human rights issues.

A more active role of the UN would be welcomed, since it is the only universal organization in this area plagued by numerous misunderstandings, claims, double standards, and distortions.

On March 15, 2006 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/251 on the establishment of the Human Rights Council. This document (however imperfect) is a product of an intricate compromise which is necessary for a radical progress in the UN human rights activities, for the elimination of double standards, selectivity and politicization in this field of international cooperation, and for stopping the attempts to broaden the mandate in what concerns conflicts between countries. All these problems were typical for the work of the Human Rights Commission throughout the recent years.

A reorganization of the UN activities in this area and the establishment of the Council whose first session took place in Geneva on June 18-22 must result in the development of a genuine international regime of human rights protection. Practically all of the Council members repre-

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depends too strongly on the axiological criteria inherent in particular civilizations. The new UN Human Rights Council acknowledges various approaches to the interpretation of human rights as well as the incomparable social and economic conditions of their implementation in various parts of our diverse world. The establishment of regional groups of countries — West European and North American, East European (including Russia), Latin American, Asian, and African ones — is a manifestation of the above.

Interestingly, the US did not welcome the transformation of the UN human rights protection mechanism and did not attempt to get elected to the Council but opted for an observer status. The US might not be sure that it would be easy for it to control the Council where regions of the world are represented proportionally and to dictate its approaches to it. Besides the General Assembly rejected the US proposal to deny membership in the Council to countries under sanctions due to human rights abuse or terrorism.

Some mass media even alleged that the US was not confident of getting elected, since it is rapidly losing its international standing in this area from the viewpoint of the international community, to which it preaches human rights in a more and more arrogant manner while increasingly suppressing the domestic democracy and freedoms. The role of a self-proclaimed mentor is generally dubious especially if the mentor is actually far from being perfect and its messianic tendencies serve its long-known and continuously implemented ambitions in foreign politics and geoeconomics.

Ideologizing international politics has been a trait of the US historical thinking. It was characteristic of the

sent by their Presidents, Foreign Ministers, and Ambassadors insisted on the indivisibility of all the categories and generations of human rights — civil, social and economic, and humanitarian ones — as well as on the impossibility of a global enforcement of unilateralist and unsubstantiated criteria originating from the experience and the development level of a particular civilization.

An international regime with well founded and nondiscriminatory criteria adequate to the specific features of various civilizations, to the diversity of social and cultural contexts, and to the variety of local economic conditions must replace unilateralist mentorship and double standards. The democratic election of members from the ranks of the General Assembly and the agreement to a comprehensive monitoring of fulfilling the human rights obligations as a prerequisite for the membership are the features of the new Council as compared to the Commission.

One should keep in mind that the very concept of generally recognized international standards in the relations not only between countries but also between individuals in them materialized for the first time in the UN Charter. The recognition of these standards became a membership precondition and is incorporated in the basic principles of the international law. However, the UN Charter combines the recognition and the protection of human rights with such fundamentals of the international law as noninterference in the domestic affairs of countries and the recognition of their sovereign equality. The UN Charter provides an agreed list of basic human rights but retrains from giving them a meaningful interpretation. Obviously, this is so for a profound reason, since the interpretation of the contents of human rights

ests, and those who refuse to understand this are evil because the US implements the supreme principles of political order superior to all the other political orders, and because the new American imperialism is directed towards a supreme moral goal".

The export of cliches and political stereotypes, the ideological programming are the necessary conditions for successful "global governance". The US theologized its global project and identifies their interests with universal ideals. A rival or an opponent of the US becomes the enemy of the universe and a devil incarnate from the standpoint of this philosophy. Like a mentor, the US attempts to enlighten other countries on their domestic routines.

Speaking of the philosophic dimension of the contemporary universalistic project, which the whole world is made to follow as a kind of a guiding star, it is becoming increasingly similar to a liberally reencoded version of the Trotskyite idea of the worldwide revolution which is to turn the world into a non-national and secular global super-society under global governance. Whereas the vehement Bolsheviks and Trotskyites believed that the Comintern was to govern and to grant "civilization certificates", nowadays the US assumes the role of a self-proclaimed arbiter and mentor together with a number of international organizations which, unlike the UN, are by no means universal. Imposing its interpretation of humanitarian rights and asserting with a Trotskyite fervor the universal character of its democracy the US destroys traditional societies of other civilizations. At the same time, in its domestic practice the US actually suppresses the rights and freedoms inherent in Western societies. Thus the human rights pathos turns into a farce and into an instrument of global

geopolitics of Monroeism which considered the Western hemisphere a zone of the US interest closed for the European countries with their interests. But what can justify claims to control the rest of the world?

The concept which the US proclaimed in international politics after World War II was characterized by H. Kissinger as a 'universal basic harmony so far concealed from mankind. [1] (Henry Kissinger. Diplomacy. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994). US President Woodrow Wilson declared at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919 that the predestination of the US is the unprecedented honor to save the World. Researchers of the American messianic ideology and its religious and philosophic sources admit that it was Wilson's vision that combined the liberal human rights and liberties rhetoric with the Calvinist doctrine of being "the instruments of God" shared by puritans, the ideas of "the redeemer nation" and "Manifest Destiny" [2] (Bowers Claude G. Beveridge and the Progressive Era. N.Y. 1932; Tuvesson E.L. Redeemer Nation. The Idea of America's Millennial Role. Chicago, 1980.). These doctrines providing the moral sanction for expansion and for governing "savage peoples" (Senator Beveridge) have always been rooted in the Calvinist belief that God rewards those who deserve his grace already in this life, and that a manifestation of this grace and an indication of the predestination are the earthly success and wealth.

It seems that the motto "Novus Ordo Seclorum" on the US Great Seal started to get transformed form a mystical mission into a synthesis of the imperialism of the Theodore Roosevelt epoch and a W. Wilson messianic spirit. Approximately, the unsophisticated philosophy here is: "we govern you since this is actually in your own inter-

a total degradation of democracy, as a decline of the Western world and of the great European civilization. This concerns not just the US but all of us as well. The disappointment results in the growing anti-Americanism. Since the US claims the role of the leader and the face of the Western world, this disappointment contributes to the hostility towards the Western, initially Christian, civilization on the whole. Such politics is a major factor responsible for the increasing tensions in the relations between civilizations with their already profound transformations and uncertain future. Having made the "US democracy" the ideological thrust of its global historical strategy, the US could at least act with greater responsibility to the rest of the world, to its own citizens, and to the entire Western civilization, from whose name it wishes to talk.

No religious and philosophical or social and political system is considered as preferential in Chapter 1 of the UN Charter entitled Purposes and Principles. Not only does it not define what democracy is, but in fact it does not refer to this term altogether. On the contrary, the UN Charter begins with recognition of the sovereign equality of various actors of international relations. This means an equal status of republics and monarchies, religious societies (Christian, Muslim, or Hinduist) and the liberal and democratic ones (societies of the Western type). All of the above are absolutely equal from the viewpoint of international law and the UN Charter and their relations are not considered as those between the superior and inferior or progressive and backward ones.

Even "tyrants" did not dare to introduce the standards of their civilizations by force. I. Kant asserted that punitive wars (bellum punitivum) between countries are

governance. All the aspects of the project must be analyzed carefully due to their potential threat to democracy.

The US State Department's Report on Human Rights triggered an extremely negative reaction in many countries. Such irritants have a negative impact on the international climate. Furthermore, the mentor tone and a full neglect for the very concepts of sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, which are among the foundations of international law mentioned in the UN Charter, echoes with a disappointment in the "Western values" and "European democracy" which attracted other worlds and civilizations for centuries thus providing political gains to the West and the US.

Essentially, the US human rights position is based on an undiscussed use of double standards depending on whether a particular country accepts Washington's strategic plans in its region. Furthermore, there are fewer attempts to even pretend to rely on verified facts and reliable information sources. Any statement of a group, no matter how insignificant, which proclaims itself a mouthpiece of the civil society in some country, can be used for allegations. Oftentimes such groups are supported from abroad and have never proven their credibility. This is very much like the methods and theory of the "revolutionary law" of the early Bolshevism in 1920-1930ies, which it borrowed, in its turn, from the medieval inquisition of the Torquemada epoch, from the witch-hunting era when any allegation made the accused prove their innocence. Certainly, this is a neglect for the presumption of innocence, which is a basic concept of law.

This entire situation is perceived negatively by the non-Western world which sees it as a profound crisis if not

exist only as long as the strong ones allow them to; treaties and agreements will become protocols of intentions. The international public law will be a discipline to study at "the Department of Useless Occupations".

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the organizations Washington seems to respect when they deal with countries other than the US, criticize the US continuously for domestic human rights abuses and deviations from the humanitarian norms in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries.

The US human rights assessments are obviously Pharseean about the promotion of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq with their severe internal conflicts under the conditions of a foreign military presence.

For example, currently 30,000 people are detained in Iraq without investigation or trial. Half of them are detained by the coalition forces. Only 8,000 of the 15,000 people arrested by the Iraqi authority are placed in detention centers of the Iraqi Ministry of Justice, thus being incarcerated more or less legally. The US also ignores the violations of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia, which is denied citizenship. The US prefers not to notice the problems of Russians in Ukraine where the Regional Languages Convention ratified by the Ukrainian Parliament is breached. Nor does it pay attention to the human rights situation in Georgia.

Yet Washington's manner of dealing with Russia is something completely different. Using the official information from Russia, the data from the Russian NGOs and the international organizations cooperating with them and with the Russian authorities, the US charges Russia

inconceivable since there are no subordinations between them, nor can one side in a conflict be pronounced the wrong one, because this implies a judicial ruling. The US globalist ideology rejects the egalitarian approach and establishes "relations of superiority and inferiority" between nations thus showing contempt for the key principles of the Enlightenment. One can say that what we witness is a decline of the ever so short epoch of democracy and liberalism.

The following concept was predominantly accepted in the 1970ies and is almost completely rejected by the US school of globalism at present. S. Hoffman, a well-known US historian and political scientist wrote that an intervention with the sole purpose of influencing the domestic affairs of a subject rather than its international conduct must be considered illegal given the fundamental principle of state sovereignty [3] (Intervention in World Politics. Ed. by Hedley Bull. Oxford. 1984, pp. 10-11, 95.).

Statements by the US leaders show that the US proclaims its right to carry out humanitarian interventions to protect human rights in the countries which "violate" them. The US wishes to set its own criteria of "truth", to be the only judge, to enforce and to punish. Declaring a country "uncivilized" on behalf of the mythical international community means denying it the protection normally guaranteed by the international law. But both sides of the coin — the adoption of the role of an arbiter by a particular country and the universal auspices — are a threat to the notions of state and sovereignty. It is the end of the system of the international law, the UN Charter, and the noninterference principle, the end of the nation-state epoch. Small countries having no nuclear arsenals will

Western history as the cradle of liberty and humanism and of the Russian history as a tradition of suppression and despotism. These stereotypes are supported by the Western media. It does not help to prove with references to historical documents that, for example, several times fewer people were killed during the entire reign of Ivan the Terrible than overnight in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew; that Henry VIII tortured and beheaded a lot more of his opponents than any Russian Tsar; that only several dozens of people were executed in the "despotic" Russia during several centuries whereas up to 100,000 women were accused of witchcraft and burned in German towns by the end of the XVIII century. Europeans are proud of the works of their ruthless rulers rather than ashamed of them, but Russians would not be Russians if they would stop thinking of the imperfections of their history with pain...

Numerous and vocal human rights groups work in Russia at present. They are the ones who supply the Western media with the "data" on both real and imaginary human rights abuses and, particularly, with allegations that they are being harassed and prevented from using foreign funds freely. They publish materials in Russia and abroad and travel about the world without any hindrance, meeting officials and parliamentarians.

The human rights and humanitarian standards situation in the US itself is far from perfect and does not measure up to the criteria which the US declares a prerequisite of being "civilized" and requires others to observe unconditionally. One recalls the skeptical view of the US democracy expressed by A. de Tocqueville whose book is for some reason often perceived nearly as an ode to America.

with infringing on human rights, "harassing" the NGOs and human rights activists, and not being sufficiently democratic. Maybe, these days Russia is not democratic enough because, in contrast to the "democratic" 1990ies, the independent and legitimate Parliaments are not suppressed with artillery? Perhaps Washington does not like that the Russian TV is no longer monopolized by pro-American gurus that used to glorify the West, but hosts the popular advocates of the sovereign democracy and independent foreign politics who were ostracized till the late 90ies.

Like any other country, Russia is not perfect from the viewpoint of human rights. But Russia has chosen the way of democratic rights and freedoms a while ago, and this is irreversible. It is impossible to deny that Russia has implemented massive improvements in its human rights and liberties legislation. During the recent years the Russian Federation Human Rights Representative — Ombudsman has been given a very high status. The Ombudsman publishes annual reports on his activities, detailing very openly both the accomplishments and the shortcomings of the human rights activities. A lot more politicians renown for their critical positions have joined the Public Chamber. All of this is done in accord with Russia's Constitution and international obligations.

Furthermore, a more intense self-criticism and even a kind of a self-torture are much more typical for the Russian society and particularly the Russian political culture than for the West, which is no less responsible for a multitude of political sins and imperfections but hardly suffers from any sense of guilt because of them. The West has long created nearly uncontested stereotypes of the

Unfortunately, many of the ideas of this classic writer apply today just as well. He wrote about the popular conformism, aversion to dissent, etc. in the US. Having noted that generally the limits of thinking in America are fairly broad, A. de Tocqueville also wrote that "In America the majority raises formidable barriers around the liberty of opinion; within these barriers an author may write what he pleases, but woe to him if he goes beyond them. Not that he is in danger of an auto-da-fe, but he is exposed to continued obloquy and persecution. His political career is closed forever, since he has offended the only authority that is able to open it."

The US went so far in convincing its own public opinion of its own democracy that now even the epoch of McCarthyism seems to be forgotten. The surprisingly rapid, convulsive elimination of the most elementary democratic norms in the US after September 11, 2001 shows how vulnerable the US democracy is. One can imagine what the fate of this democracy would have been if the US, a country that encountered no internal or external threats throughout its entire history, had to deal with at least some of the perils that Russia has experienced.

Nowadays it is obvious that the deeply entrenched US tradition of official patriotism influences negatively the condition of the democratic institutions and human rights in the country, including the freedom of expression. It inhibits any serious public criticism of the entire spectrum of the US Government's politics or even debates on it anywhere including the mass media. Possibly there is no other country in the world where the official propaganda deforms the public opinion as severely as it does in the US. At present the intensity of this propaganda is on the level comparable to the worst Cold War times.

Probably, the US remains the only developed country in the world where maximally unified historiography clichés still prevail: due to America's steadfast adherence to the "redeemer nation" myth, other countries are prone not to trust the US and to consider it a factor of instability and general unpredictability in international affairs. The triumphs of the alleged victory in the Cold War disguise the eternal geopolitical and economic interests, the ambition to govern, and a reluctance to change ideologically and to treat other civilizations and countries with respect.

The reduction of democratic freedoms in the US and a visible distortion of the system of "checks and balances", that the US used to be so proud of, in favor of administrative and police mechanisms no longer appear to be a temporary reaction to the September 11 events. Rather, this is a logical inner transformation, a kind of Falangism, a tendency contributing to the threat to the rest of the world from a powerful but poorly accountable to its public opinion US machine.

The practice of imposing "democracy" and the US models of development on other countries and entire regions is the thrust of the present US Administration's international strategy. Hence the inherently uncritical perception of the US domestic situation in this area and the ideology-dominated approach to international issues. Besides, a vast majority of Americans do not share the corresponding official approaches which do not result from a free democratic debate.

Washington's foreign politics objectives are a secret to nobody. The US tendency to mask these objectives with the help of universal goals like the global triumph of democracy, a slogan similar to Khrushchev's notorious victory

ly towards market and democracy, some countries deviate from this high road" — this is not a citation from a 1960ies Communist Party Congress, but the words of Condoleezza Rice [4] (Condoleezza Rice, In the Name of National Interests. Pro et Contra, Spring 2000, Moscow, p. 118 (in Russian)).

The US with its shrinking freedom of expression and views becomes increasingly similar to the Soviet Union with its ideological campaigns against dissenters. Ironically, now it is time to remind the US that neither the inquisition, nor the tsars succeeded in stopping the propagation of ideas and views opposite to the officially adopted doctrine. A. de Tocqueville wrote: "The empire of the majority succeeds much better in the United States, since it actually removes any wish to publish them." In all epochs societies found ways to reveal the vices and follies of the rulers. "Moliere criticized the courtiers in the plays that were acted before the court. But the ruling power in the United States is not to be made game of. The smallest reproach irritates its sensibility, and the slightest joke that has any foundation in truth renders it indignant...everything must be made the subject of encomium... The majority lives in the perpetual utterance of self-applause, and there are certain truths which the Americans can learn only from strangers or from experience", wrote A. de Tocqueville.

ry of communism in the whole world, is also a definite danger. The entire world deems these goals a disguise which is to make it possible for the US to avoid criticism internationally and domestically and to cover up a pursuit of its own interests in the global politics. The overstatement of the exterior threats to the US security, which allegedly justify any licenses in human rights and democratic norms, leads to the same result.

All the above is just a part of the problem which Americans define as "morally ambiguous times". The uncertainty of the moral foundations of the domestic and foreign politics always ends badly for a country whose leadership chooses this course under the slogan of political expediency. Justifying claims for new regions by the need to protect old dominions is the classics of imperialism. On the eve of World War II Berlin kept referring to the need to defend Sudeete Germans, to provide for a natural configuration of borders, etc. The logical completion of this type of a philosophy is the global conquest, since only then a country can finally conclude that no exterior danger to its possessions exists. Altogether this can be termed precisely as a full bankruptcy of liberalism as a philosophy and of the Western democracy as its practical implementation.

Like the early XX century Bolsheviks, the ideological mentors assert the right of the "advanced and progressive" countries to push forward those who stayed behind. The similarity is not limited to the doctrine proclaiming the universality of liberalism as the Khrushchev-era scientific communism postulated that the Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. Even the invectives against the noncompliant are in the style of the 1960ies Khrushchev-era propaganda: "While history evolves steadily-

its politics in the area. The US has to remain committed to the highest human rights standards for other countries to be ready to align their corresponding laws and practices with those of the US. However during the last decades the situation in the US in this area has deteriorated. Their standard is no longer perfect, attractive, or universal.

Limitations of Rights and Liberties in the Antiterrorist Campaign

The events of the recent years have resulted in a transformation of the US authority's approach to the domestic law enforcement practice. The Constitutional and legal parameters of the US system changed dramatically and the democratic rights and liberties of US citizens were slashed. Reports presented by international human rights organizations (Human rights Watch, Amnesty International, etc.) indicate that the Patriot Act approved by the US Congress in October 2001 has in fact provided the US Department of Justice, the FBI, the CIA, and the immigration authorities with unconstitutional power.

Local human rights watch groups find themselves under an increasingly tight control in the US. Recently the FBI had to admit under public pressure that the Bureau's antiterrorist divisions accumulated an extensive dossier on a number of well-known nongovernmental organizations.

It transpired that the FBI routinely practices a sub-mission to private companies of letters on national security without court warrants (30,000 letters annually). In these letters it requests that companies secretly provide confidential information about their clients including bank accounts, home addresses, phone numbers, etc.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE US

A Brief Report

I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America. A. de Tocqueville, "Democracy in America".

Russian nongovernmental organizations also monitor the activities of various US institutions which increasingly infringes on the internationally recognized human rights.

The Historical Perspective Foundation organized a cooperation of human rights activity experts and specialists on international law to prepare the present Report. It is the first phase of an extensive program of the collection and analysis of the human rights practices information in the world. The Historical Perspective Foundation plans to publish likewise materials on a regular basis in press and other media.

Human rights used to be a priority of Western democracies and of the US in particular. This priority is reflected by a number of official documents and constitutional norms. Due to this for decades the US model of democracy was of a high standing in the world and the human rights activities of the US officials and politicians invariably attracted attention. However, a perfect human rights reputation of the US is a prerequisite for the efficiency of

Monitoring the activities of nongovernmental public organizations is one of the forms of control over the public opinion in the US. According to human rights watch sources, the Pentagon secretly watched dissidents and NGO activists and collected information about anti-war groups and protesters in a secret TALON database. In March, 2006 a group of Congressmen from the Democratic Party attempted to pass a resolution demanding that the Pentagon presents details of the program and the legal grounds of its existence, but the initiative was opposed by the Republicans.

The treatment of the non-citizen terrorism suspects detained in the US has received much criticism. They are denied the legal guarantees envisioned by the US laws including the right to have a defender appointed by court and the right to have charges against them filed without unwarranted delay.

There were judicial persecutions of anti-war protesters, including C. Sheehan who held a vigil outside Bush's ranch in Texas demanding a meeting with the US President and of the protesters who held a meeting in front of the White House on September 26, 2005.

Recently a Pomona College (California) Professor Miguel Tinker Salas told journalists that he was interrogated by two FBI agents after having criticized in class the US foreign policy in Venezuela.

All of the above constitutes evidence of violating the freedom of expression and political views as well as an infringement on the right to respect of private life and correspondence, which are the basic civil rights.

Personal Security

Violence is rampant in the US. 50,000 suicides and felonies are committed in the US annually. On September 25, 2005 the US Department of Justice reported that 5,182,670 violent crimes were committed in the US in 2004. 21.4 of 1,000 people older than 11 became victims of crime, which makes about 1 violent crime per 47 US citizens.

According to the data published by the FBI the number of homicides in the first six months of 2005 increased by 2.1% compared to the same period of time in 2004. 4,080 homicides were reported in cities with the population greater than 10,000, whereas the number of felonies in cities with the population less than 10,000 increased by 13%.

194 people were killed in 2005 in Washington DC, its population being under 600,000. The number of crimes in Chicago in January – September, 2005 was over 125,000 including 352 homicides, 11,564 robberies, 8,903 holdups, and 534 arsons.

334 people were killed in Philadelphia in January – mid-November, 2005, which is more than during the entire 2004.

198 homicides were reported in LA in the first half of 2005, an 11% increase compared to the previous year.

72 people were killed in Compton, California, a place with the population of just 96,000. Camden, New Jersey happens to be the most dangerous place in the US – its felonies level is 10 times and the number of robberies is 7 times the US average.

More firearms are privately owned in the US than in any other country in the world. According to the June,

2005 Statistical Report of The Brady Campaign, a group against violence with firearms, Americans owned some 192,000,000 firearms.

A study conducted by the Washington Post and ABC showed that about 10% of those polled have been shot at and 14% have been threatened with firearms.

According to the information published by the statistics bureau of the US Department of Justice in 2005, 339,000 crimes involving firearms were reported in the US in 2004 including 11,300 homicides, 162,900 robberies, and 165,000 assaults.

The December 25, 2005 the Washington Post wrote that almost 12,000 Americans use firearms to kill people annually. 70% of homicides, 41% of robberies, and 19% of assaults were committed in 2004 using firearms, reports the US police. Uncontrollable spread of firearms resulted in a murder spree. In February, 2005 mother and husband of Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz, DA were shot dead in their Chicago house. In March, 2005 a rape suspect killed a judge and wounded two others in Fulton, Atlanta and fled on a stolen car.

On March 12, 2005 an armed individual opened fire at a religious ceremony in Sheraton Hotel in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and injuring 4.

On March 21, 2005 Jeff Weise, 17, killed his grandmother and grandfather and started shooting at Red Lake High School, Minnesota, killing 8 more people including a school guardian, a teacher, and students, and injuring 14. A 14-year-old girl shot her father dead in Colorado on April 25, 2005. A man shot his mother on Christmas Day 2005 in a house in a suburb of Washington DC, then drove 8 miles, killed three more people, and committed suicide.

Increasingly more often the freedom of some of the Americans to own firearms conflicts with the right of others not to get killed by a stray bullet or to fall victim of a maniac or a psychopath. This makes Americans consider the possibility of introducing a reasonable self-control of the society in what concerns access to firearms.

Human Rights Violations by Courts and Law Enforcement Agencies

The US police often resorts to violence. According to July 14, 2005 LA Times, in LA a policeman shot dead a 19-month-old daughter of a suspect during an attempt to arrest him. This case outraged the local population. On October 9 in New Orleans five policemen beat a 64-year-old retired man, a former teacher, during arrest. On December 26, 2005 a policeman fired at least 6 times at a black man armed with a knife in New Orleans eventually killing him. Police abuses are rarely punished adequately. According to March 31, 2005 LA Times only 8 of over 200 alleged cases of abuse by police were investigated properly. The rest of the complaints were either shelved or privately settled.

The US judicial system often treats people unfairly and infringes on their rights. Several instances of unfair sentences were described by mass media in 2005. Robert Clark Jr. of Atlanta was exonerated after 24 years in prison when a DNA test proved he was innocent. Overall 164 people have been freed from prisons due to the results of DNA tests. Clark has served the longest term among them. On December 21, 2005 Larry King talked live in a CNN TV show to 4 ex-convicts whose innocence was proven by DNA tests. These people have been in jail for

had to live in tents, had to do various types of work, received only two meals a day, and had no free time whatsoever. In August, 2005 a student from Qatar detained two years ago without any specific charges told about the living conditions in prison. There were no guarantees of the availability of the very essentials. Inmates lived for a long time in an extremely small ward (for up to 60 days). They remained handcuffed even in the ward and while taking a shower. In August 29 – September 1, 2005, at the time of the Hurricane Katrina, officers of a New Orleans correctional institution abandoned 600 inmates. For four days many of them had to be in water up to the neck and without food, drinking water, and fresh air. Sexual harassment is a typical phenomenon in US prisons. According to the June, 2005 US Department of Justice Report, the administration of the correctional system received 8,210 complaints about sexual violence. 42% of these offenses were committed by the prison staff. According to a Human Rights Watch report, 21% of inmates in 7 prisons in the mid-West have been sexually assaulted by inmates of the same sex. The entire range of human rights problems related to the death penalty remain acute. As of the early December, 2005, 1,000 people were executed in the US after the death penalty was reinstated in the early 1970ies. 47 geo-ple were executed in 2005. At present over 3,400 inmates are in the death row in the US (officially, 5% of them are mentally retarded).

over 10 years. In the show Mark Cerragos, LA attorney, said that he saw reports indicating that about 20% of the sentences in the US are erroneous. The 2005 Report of the Death Penalty Information Center says that US death penalty system is deplorably unfair due to widespread malfeasances and deception of judges.

The US is the country with the world's highest number of convicts. According to the statistics of the US Department of Justice published on October 23, 2005, the total number of convicts at the end of 2004 was 2,267,787. This means that 724 of 100,000 people were behind bars, which is an 18% increase over the last 10 years and 25% more than in any other country. The New York Times wrote that the number of life sentences in the US doubled over the last 10 years. The number of convicts increased by 900 people weekly in 2003-2004. In 50 states the number of people imprisoned for the first time increased by 2.3% in the first half of 2004 compared to the same period of the previous year and made 48,000. As of December 31, 2004 prisons in 24 states were full or even overpopulated. A slash of prison funding by the government led to the reduction of the healthcare for inmates in some states and a large number of them contracted hepatitis or tuberculosis. In April, 2005 a 44-year-old inmate died in a New York prison because he did not receive timely medical assistance. Hundreds of inmates in New York alone suffered head injuries over the recent years due to being treated cruelly. An inmate of the Raikers Island prison, New York, became blind in one eye after being hit on the head by a guard. Another had a tympanic membrane injury, and one more had his jaw broken by police. In Phoenix inmates

spent \$13 bln in 1998-2004 to make the wishes of their clients come true. \$2.1 bln was spent on lobbying in the Federal Government and the Congress, and \$3 bln — on the presidential and Congress elections in 2004. The USA Today wrote that 5,410 trips of Congressmen were sponsored from unknown sources and that Congressmen received \$16 mln in privately supported trips since 2000. Reportedly, over 2,000 former Government officials became lobbyists, including 273 former White House staff and 250 former Congressmen and heads of Government departments, since 1998.

A nationwide public opinion poll conducted by the US News and World Report on October 24, 2005 showed that 73% of Americans think that their leaders lost ties to the life of ordinary Americans. 64% of Americans believe that their leaders are spoiled by authority. 62% think that the leaders pursue their own wealth. A joint poll by the Gallup Institute, USA Today, and CNN revealed that only 29% of the Americans view the work of the predominantly Republican Congress positively. This is the lowest rating since 1994. 49% of adult Americans opine that most of the Congressmen are corrupt. Ramsey Clark, the former Attorney General, said that calling the US a democracy is an insult to democracy itself.

The US tightens the Government control over information. Phone tapping and monitoring Internet users without court warrants have become possible. Attempts are made to provide for an exterritorial status of the US legislature and regulations concerning Internet and telecommunications. Cases of direct pressure on journalists are reported. Journalists were requested to disclose their information

Violations of Political Rights and Democratic Freedoms

The US human rights groups focus specifically on the political rights in their analysis of the human rights practices in various countries throughout the world. A lack of transparency and access to the information about the corresponding practice in the US create a stable illusion that the US still represents a standard of democracy and political perfection. In reality, corruption largely affects the decision-making of the US Congress and Administration. It is well-known that companies and other interested parties hire consulting and public relation companies to lobby in the US Congress and Administration, thus spending money in order to influence their decisions and to win Government contracts. The US media reported on January 4, 2006 that Jack Abramoff, one of the most powerful lobbyists in Washington DC, pleaded guilty to three charges including a conspiracy to bribe public officials. Part of the deal under which Abramoff pleaded guilty required him to co-operate in a Department of Justice investigation into his dealings with members of Congress and their staff suspected of corruption. The case became the worst scandal in the US politics for decades. Reportedly, 20 congressmen and their staff are involved. However the Abramoff case is just the top of the iceberg. The US Washington Post and the British Observer wrote that in Washington lobbying is a major industry with incredible revenues. Currently the number of registered lobbyists reaches 34,750, which is 60 times the number of the elected federal employees. Over \$2 bln pass through the hands of lobbyists annually. They have

The international community denounces the US attempts to limit the diversity of opinions. The November 22, 2005 issue of the British Daily Mirror cited a secret Downing Street paper dated April 16, 2004 writing that during the Iraq war the US intended to bomb the headquarters of the al-Jazeera TV company in Doha, Qatar, in order to block the dissemination of information about the real situation and its negative impact on the image of the US mission. The news caused protests of al-Jazeera employees in 30 countries and a criticism from the International Federation of Journalists. The British Observer wrote that the Baghdad and Kabul offices of al-Jazeera came under fire during the Iraq war, and its journalists were detained, insulted, and threatened.

In fact the US routinely violates the freedom of press. On April 8, 2003 the US soldiers killed the Spanish Telecino TV network cameraman Jose Couso. After that a warrant was issued for three US soldiers by the Spanish court. On August 28, 2005 the US troops fired on a group of Reuters reporters. A cameraman died on the spot from multiple head and chest injuries. Two Iraqi reporters who came to the place where tragedy happened were arrested.

According to the International Committee to Protect Journalists the US detains four Iraqi journalists in prisons in Iraq and one journalist from al-Jazeera in Guantanamo. Specific charges have never been filed against either of these individuals. Judith Miller, a New York Times Reporter, was sentenced to a prison term for refusing to disclose her information source in July 2005. A Toronto Star photographer suffered damage when working in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The New Orleans police-

sources. There were a number of indictments against reporters during 2003-2004, who refused to cooperate with the law enforcement agencies.

The US is on the 44th position in the annual freedom of press rating of the Reporters Without Borders. This organization publicly charged the US authorities with attempts to limit the rights and freedoms of foreign journalists working on the US territory. Cases of illegal detention of journalists, their deportation under various pretexts, humiliating interrogations etc. are reported.

Scandals related to the Government's attempts to conceal or manipulate information are a persistent phenomenon in the US. On March 13, 2005 the New York Times opined that a new century of packaged TV news commenced in the US. The Federal Government distributes them to TV channels aggressively. At least 20 federal agencies including the Pentagon and the Bureau of Census prepared and distributed hundreds of TV stories in the recent four years.

The US military pays the Iraqi newspapers and journalists for the so-called "information operations campaign". On November 30, 2005 LA Times wrote that the US military write stories favorable to the US mission in Iraq and hired a Washington firm to translate them into Arabic and run them in Baghdad newspapers. According to LA Times the US military also purchased an Iraqi newspaper and took control of a radio station to use them to channel pro-American messages to the Iraqi public. It was also reported that the US officers established a Baghdad press-club which pays its members for the positive coverage of the US military operations. The Washington Post editorial terms these abuses of the freedom of information "psychological propaganda".

serious problems in the US where economic, social, and cultural rights of the people are not guaranteed. Reuters reported on April 25, 2005 that in 2005 the London School of Economics analyzed the situations in 8 leading countries of the world and concluded that the highest level of social inequality is found in the US. The poverty rate in the US is the highest among the developed countries; it is twice as high as in most industrial states.

The data of the US Census Bureau shows that the official poverty level in the country grew from 12.5% in 2003 to 12.7% in 2004, and the number of people in poverty increased by 1,100,000 — from 35.9 mln to 37 mln. This means that one of eight Americans lives in poverty. The poverty rate in Detroit, Miami, and Newark is greater than 28%. The New York Times wrote on November 22, 2005 that 3.9 mln families had relatives who suffered from malnutrition in 2004.

Homelessness is a serious problem in the US. USA Today wrote that according to a 2005 snapshot calculation there are 727,304 homeless in the country, that is, one out of 400 Americans has no shelter. A study conducted by the Conference of US Mayors in 24 cities including Chicago, Boston, and LA showed that the number of assisted housing requests by low-income families and individuals increased by 6% in 2005 compared to the previous year on the average. The number of the requests grew in 71% of the cities studied. The number of food stamps requests increased by 12% on the average and was found to grow in 76% of the cities.

Over 3,100 families with almost 6,000 children file urgent housing applications in Washington every year. Many of them sleep in the streets, in cars, or at bus sta-

men threw him on the ground and took away his notes and two cameras. When he asked to return his films the policemen insulted and threatened him. A reporter from a New Orleans newspaper was also attacked when he tried to take pictures of a shootout between the police and the local residents. The police arrested him and broke his equipment. Serious violations of democratic freedoms and election rights were recorded during the 2004 Presidential elections. The US was notified many times that its legislation and practice do not comply with the provisions of the OSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990.

The system of registration of voters is also imperfect. Local residents whose names were not in the voter lists were denied bulletins at some polling stations. The ban to vote for previously indicted individuals which is in effect in some states was of a discriminatory character. It affected the rights of 13% of African Americans. In some states (Florida, etc.) which were crucial for the outcome of the elections, the above number reached 25%.

Revenue services selectively checked several major human rights watch groups critical of G. Bush shortly before the elections. In particular this was the case with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which is a leading African American NGO. Thus, it is fair to say that the so-called "administrative resource" was used in the elections, which is a substantial departure from the democratic norms of preparing for the election.

Violations of Social and Economic Rights

The US is the world's richest country. At the same time its poverty rate is the highest among the developed countries. Poverty, malnutrition, and homelessness are

A September 2005 study of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation showed that only 60% of the employers offer a medical insurance to their employees. Five years ago the figure was 69%. The annual insurance cost for a family in 2005 reached \$10,880 on the average. In the future the growing cost of healthcare will be preventing more and more people from buying medical insurance. On November 21, 2005 the House of Representatives adopted a bill slashing the budget by nearly \$50 bln, which includes a reduction of the healthcare funding. The result is a deterioration of living conditions of the poorer part of the population. Social rights and access to major humanitarian resources are the prime indicators of the real position of a country in the global rating of rights and freedoms. Problems of the poor are combined with the problem of racial segregation in the US society.

Racial Discrimination

The racial discrimination is a chronic ill of the US society. Black Americans and other ethnic minorities find themselves on the lowest steps of the social ladder in the US. Their living standards are substantially inferior to those of the white population. According to the State of Black LA Report the income level of African American families was only 1/10 of that of their white countrymen. In 2004 the poverty rate among black Americans was 24.7%, 21.9% among the Hispanics, and 8.6% among the white population. 100,000 of the 500,000 population of New Orleans live in poverty, most of these people being blacks. The average index of home owners is 48.1% for blacks compared to 75.4% for whites. The Washington Post wrote

LA Times wrote on June 16, 2005 that LA is the "capital of homelessness" in the US, where the number of homeless or people spending nights in shelters reaches 90,000 a day, including 35,000 chronically homeless. According to the Department of Labor statistics, the number of unemployed in November, 2005 was 7.6 mln and the unemployment level was 5%. Almost 20% of the unemployed had been jobless for 6 months or longer. Some 3.6 mln people had no unemployment insurance. The Washington Post wrote on August 3, 2005 that the employees of the US meat-processing industry work in severe conditions suffering from skin cuts and deceases. In some cases they had their hands amputated or died. The November 1, 2005 issue of China Press, a New York City newspaper, wrote that the employees of most of the city's restaurants are denied elementary labor protection. Typically they have to work long hours for a low pay and have practically no medical insurance. About 38% of them suffered burns and almost half — had cut injuries. The employees of the New York south-eastern public transit system went on strike on December 20, 2005 after failing to reach an agreement with the Transit Authority on wages and social security. The per capita medical expenses in the US are the highest in the world but the medical insurance system is in a deep crisis. According to the available statistics, the total medical expenses increased by 8.2% in 2004 compared to the previous year, but 45.8 mln Americans (15.7% of the population) had no medical insurance. This is 800,000 more than the previous year. In New York alone almost 2 mln residents had no medical insurance, 2/3 of them — workers and office staff. 18,000 Americans die every year due to the lack of healthcare.

The average percentage of colored population having no medical insurance is higher than that of the white population — it makes 19.7% for blacks and 32.7% for Hispanics. Therefore one out of three Hispanic Americans has no medical insurance. The average life span of black Americans is 6 years shorter than that of whites, and the mortality among black children under one year of age is twice as high as that of white children. According to the Washington Post, 76.3 out of 200,000 blacks are HIV-positive, a figure 8 times higher than that for whites. Over one half of the newly identified HIV-positive are blacks. Furthermore, black women account for 72% of new HIV cases. Over 80,000 black Americans die every year due to not having a medical insurance. The mortality rate for middle-aged black men is twice as high as that for whites.

Racial discrimination is widespread in the US system of criminal justice. William Bennett, the former head of the US Department of Education, once said that the only way to reduce the crime level in the US is abortion for all the black women. There is a tendency in the US to sentence black offenders more harshly than whites. According to the State of Black America 2005, a report published by the National Urban League, African Americans are three times more likely to be incarcerated and the average jail sentence for the same crime is six months longer for blacks than whites. Blacks are sentenced to death four times more often than whites. A December, 2005 University of Maryland study showed that an individual who killed a white American is 2-3 times more likely to be sentenced to death than a one who killed someone of another color. Also, blacks are sentenced to death for killing whites 2.5

on April 11, 2005 that in 2004 some 29% of the blacks who owned homes or paid mortgage got credits with higher interest rates than 10% of the whites. The statistics published by the US Federal Reserve in September, 2005 also shows that, according to the 2004 loans data, there was a 32.4% incidence of higher interest rates for blacks, 20.3% for Hispanics, and 8.7% for whites. On July 14, 2005 LA Times cited the State of Black LA report which says that black Americans are left behind in income levels, housing, healthcare, and education. Black Americans had the lowest average income per family — \$31,905 compared to \$53,978 of white Americans. Black Americans are just 10% of the total US population but over 30% of them are homeless.

Ethnic minorities are discriminated on the job market and in the choice of the occupation. According to the US Department of Labor in November, 2005 the unemployment level among Black Americans was 10.6% compared to 4.3% among whites. The average salary of a Black male was 70% of that of a white, and the average salary of a Black female — 83% of that of a white. Often ethnic minorities have no access to prestigious occupations. The US Equal Opportunity Commission cites a report, according to which the employment discrimination is 31% for Asian Americans, 26% for African Americans, and the discrimination of Muslims doubled after September 11, 2001. The China Press, a New York City newspaper, wrote that even though Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians are 57% of the entire New York City workforce, less than 19% of them attain executive positions compared to whites. 76% of the executive positions are occupied by whites, and the share of whites in the Government is 97%.

Violations of the Rights of Women and Children

Adequate protection of women and children is not provided for in the US. Women do not have the same opportunities as men do in the country's political life. Being 51.1% percent of the US population, they have only 81 seats of 535 (15.1%) in the US Congress, including 14 of 100 (14%) in the Senate and 67 of 435 (15.4%) in the House of Representatives. Governors in only 8 of the 50 states are women. No woman of color has ever been a Governor. Women are Mayors in only 14 of 100 largest US cities (14%). In November, 2005 only 81 women worked in executive authorities of the states — 25.7% of the 315 positions. 1,668 of the 7,382 employees of the legislature of the states are women (22.6%). A study of the Inter-Parliamentary Union showed that the US is on the 61st position in terms of the women's representation in nationwide legislative systems and parliaments of 180 countries with direct elections (58th in 2003).

The unemployment level is higher and salaries are lower among women in the US than among men. According to the US Census Bureau the average women's salary in 2004 was \$31,223, whereas the average men's salary was \$40,798. The annual income of women owning businesses was 49% of that of men. In 2004 the Equal Opportunity Commission received 24,249 complaints about the discrimination of women and 4,512 complaints about the discrimination of pregnant women.

The poverty rate for the families of unmarried women is the highest in the US. In 2004, 28.4% of the families of unmarried women lived very much below the poverty line. More and more women and children are becoming

times more often than whites for killing blacks, and 3.5 times more often than blacks for killing blacks.

Tough blacks constitute just 12.2% of the total US population, 41% of the US convicts sentenced to more than one year are blacks. 8.4% of all 25-29 years old black males are in jail. According to the reports of Human Rights Watch Group and other organizations, after September 11, 2001 at least 70 people (all but one of them being Muslims) were detained as "prime eyewitnesses". One third of them were behind bars for over two months. Some have been under arrest for over six months, and one of them has spent over a year in prison. According to the Washington Observer Weekly #42, 2005, James Yee, a Chinese American and a former Muslim clergyman who had served at the US Guantanamo Bay Base was arrested on a series of charges including espionage, leaking national secrets, and instigating riots. These crimes are typically punished by death, but the military departments withdrew all charges as their investigation revealed no evidence. This case was referred to by mass media as one of the worst mistakes of the US justice system in history.

Violent crime against ethnic minorities is on the rise in the US. According to an FBI report published in October, 2005, 9,528 people were victims of hate crime in 2004, 53.8% percent of them being blacks. 60.6% of the individuals who committed hate crimes were whites. According to statistics, black Americans are 20 times more likely to become victims of hate crimes than whites. In LA 56% of the hate crimes were crimes against blacks.

Department of Justice shows that the number of female convicts in the US reached in June, 2004 103,310, which is a 2.9% growth compared to 2003 and a growth twice as fast as that in the case of men. Almost 50% of female convicts reported sexual assaults. The US correctional institutions report 8,210 sexual violence complaints in 2004, and their administrations confirmed almost 2,100 cases of sexual violence, most of the victims being women. The living conditions of children in the US are a major concern as well. The US is on the second-lowest position in the children's poverty rate list of the 22 developed countries in the world. The statistics published by the US Census Bureau on August 30, 2005 showed that children are almost a third of the country's 37 mln poor and that 1.35 mln children in the US have experienced living without shelter.

The number of poor among the Americans under 18 years of age in Washington DC alone is 30% of the total population, 27% in Mississippi and Louisiana, 26% in New Mexico, and 24% in West Virginia. In New Orleans, 40% of the urban area children lived in poverty. The health of the US children deteriorates and the child mortality grows. 29% of American children had no medical insurance for some time during the recent 12 months, and many of them have neither been examined by doctors nor immunized. The China Press, a New York City newspaper, wrote on May 5, 2005 that during the last 20 years the US Government-funded scientists tested an AIDS vaccine without any independent control on children living in social shelters. This practice did an enormous damage to the children's health and many of them died during the treatment.

homeless. In Pasadena, South California, the number of homeless women and children reached 701 in 2005 (57.6% of the total number of homeless in the city) which is a 42.7% increase compared to 2003. Currently, homeless women and children are the single most numerous group of the homeless, being ahead of unmarried men in this respect for the first time.

Women often become victims of domestic violence in the US. The statistics of the US Institute for Family Violence Studies indicates that 5.3 mln women suffer from domestic violence and 1,232 women are killed by their sex partners annually. Reportedly, one out of three US women has been a victim of domestic violence at least once in her life.

Sexual violence against women in the US is frequent. According to the FBI data some 94,635 women (63.5 out of 100,000) were raped in the US in 2004. This is a 0.8% increase compared to 2003. Women are often sexually harassed at work. In 2004 the US Equal Opportunity Commission received 13,136 sexual harassment complaints, 84.9% of them from women.

According to a Pentagon study published on December 23, 2005, about 6% of women in military academies said that they were sexually assaulted in 2004-2005, and about half of the women reported being sexually harassed. 60% of women and 27% of men in the Reserve Corps and the National Guards Corps have been sexually assaulted or harassed, and 11% of women there have been raped.

Cases of a degrading treatment of female convicts in prisons are becoming more frequent. An April 24, 2005 report of the Legal Statistics Bureau of the US

prison reached 102,000 by the end of 2004. The US is one of the few countries in the world where crimes committed by minors can be punished by a life sentence without parole. According to a Human Rights Watch Report 93% of young criminals sentenced to life in jail without parole were convicted for murder-related crimes. This means that an individual involved in a crime with murder is automatically considered guilty of murder even if he or she did not kill anyone personally. Some 9,700 convicts are imprisoned for life for crimes which they committed being under 18 years of age. At least 2,225 minors are imprisoned for life in the US without parole compared to a total of 12 minors in the rest of the world. 16% of the convicted minors were 13-15 years old at the time they committed crimes and about 59% of minors were sentenced to life without parole for their first crimes. At present the number of minors doing life sentences without parole in the US is three times higher than 15 years ago. Minors often become victims of violence in jails, and the occurrence of sexual harassment of minor convicts by the correctional institution staff is almost 10 times higher than in adult prisons. The US is one of the few countries in the world where death sentences for minors are practiced. Currently, no minimal age for a death sentence is established in six states of the US. 63 minors under 17 were sentenced to death in the US in 2004. At present about 3,500 people are in the death row in the US, 72 of them being sentenced for crimes committed when they were under 18 years of age. Domestic violence against children and the conditions of social control over adoption in the US constitute a topic of particular importance. Russia was shocked by several cases of murder of children by their adopted parents.

A third of the US children were born out of wedlock and half of them live in incomplete families. At present parents of 4 mln US children are unemployed and the children face such phenomena as depression, drug and alcohol abuse in their families. More US minors often become victims of violence. More and more students bring knives or other types of weapons to school. In 2005 2,845 students in schools were found to carry knives or other types of weapons in Maryland, which is a 63% increase over the last five years. Schools in Virginia also report 2,278 cases of weapon confiscations in 2003-2004. 148 cases of weapon confiscations took place in Washington DC in 2004-2005. In August, 2005 the Washington Post wrote that a poll of 325 7th and 8th grade Hispanic students in Montgomery District showed that 12% of the teenagers carried weapons — knives or clubs (1% was found to have a gun); 38% took part in fights; 27% stayed at home because they were afraid to be in the street; 16% have been threatened with weapons or wounded; 20% took part in gang clashes; 12% were gang members. Frequent occurrence of violence is a peril to the security of 26.4 mln students ages 12-16. According to statistics, 12 US minors die every day due to crimes involving firearms. LA Times reported on March 4, 2005 that over 70% of the 6th grade students in LA either witnessed violence or were its victims. In some neighborhoods of the city this number reached 90%. The extent of the judicial protection of children's rights in the US is much lower than it normally is in the international practice. The US Department of Justice Report shows that the number of minors in the US doing time in

The US Department of Justice Memo dated March, 2004 became known to the media. According to this document the intelligence services were enabled to interrogate individuals detained in Iraq by the coalition forces outside the country. This is an authorization of a breach of the international humanitarian law and, in particular, of the Fourth Geneva Convention which explicitly prohibits to move or deport prisoners of war from occupied territories. The US journalists concluded from the Memo that dozens of people have been transported from Iraq to third-party countries by the CIA without notice to the Red Cross International Committee, the corresponding commissions of the US Congress, or the Pentagon's investigative task force which examines the cases of degrading treatment of detainees in Abu Ghraib.

The US troops also react aggressively to the activities of foreign journalists. Numerous cases are described where foreign reporters were attacked or shot at in Baghdad and several other major cities (over 40 journalists were killed or injured). The Human Rights Watch Report dated March, 2004 includes serious allegations against the US troops command in Afghanistan. The main charges are a disproportional use of force resulting in deaths of civilians and a mistreatment of the people in the US custody.

It has been noted that the US servicemen are sure to remain unpunished and act accordingly in the detention facilities including the Bagram military base. Measures bordering with torture are applied to insurgents. Cases of people dying while in the US custody due to severe detention conditions are reported. Terrorism suspects have no legal defense and no way to disprove charges against them. Instances of

Children from Russia are often adopted with legal irregularities and remain outside of the scope of legal control in the US. In particular there is no control of their situations by international human rights organizations with the participation of Russian representatives.

Human Rights Violations by the US in Other Countries

There is massive evidence of human rights abuse by the US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As for Iraq, hundreds of killings of civilians have been reported since the start of the military operation in the country. These killings resulted from legally dubious measures of the US military during special operations, at checkpoints, and after sudden attacks on the US convoys. It has been noted that under these circumstances the US troops fired for effect without any delay, often disproportionately and indiscriminately. There are established facts of the US refusing to investigate properly the incidents involving civilian casualties due to the disproportional and indiscriminate use of force by the coalition troops.

MK77 firebombs containing the so-called white phosphorus were used during the Falluja operation in November, 2004, which is a breach of the 1980 Convention on Certain Chemical Weapons and a violation of the Geneva protocol on white phosphorus.

Violations of the Geneva Conventions were in fact recognized by D. Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense. He admitted in a TV interview on May 5, 2004 that the Conventions were not applied in Iraq strictly but served as the core principles of treating the detainees.

defiling books sacred for Muslims and mutilating the bodies of dead Talebans have been discussed in mass media.

The US troops are charged with using weapons causing indiscriminate damage during their operations against insurgents, thus entailing civilian casualties. The troops detain and convoy massive numbers of people suspected of having ties to Talebans during search operations. People remain in custody for months with no connection to their relatives or a chance to pass information about themselves.

The December 13, 2005 USA Today issue quotes a 2004 study published in the Lancet medical journal. According to this study the number of Iraqis killed since the beginning of the US mission reached 100,000, the majority of them being women and children. The US continued military operations outside their country in 2005, often affecting the civilian population. Those operations resulted in numerous deaths and injuries. On July 4, 2005 the US troops killed 17 people including women and children by an air strike in the Afghan province of Kunar. On August 12, 2005 the US troops fired from an armored vehicle on the people exiting a mosque in the Iraqi city of Ramadi, killing 15 people, including 8 children, and injuring 17. On August 30, 2005 the US fighters launched several attacks in the region of the Iraqi border city of Kaim killing at least 56 people including old men and children. On November 21, 2005 the US troops fired on a civilian vehicle in the North of Baghdad killing a family of 5, three of them — children. On January 14, 2006 the US fighters bombed a Pakistan village at the Afghan border and killed at least 18 people. This incident echoed with protests all over Pakistan. After the 2004 scandal because of the mistreatment of detainees by the US forces, new reports of similar abus-

es surfaced in 2005. The US staff in Iraq used various tortures to obtain information from the people in their custody. Detainees were subjected to a systematic degrading treatment, sleep deprivation. They were tied to a wall, beaten with baseball bats, held without food and water, forced to listen to loud music in the dark for many days in a row, and intimidated with dogs. According to the Human Rights Watch Report (September, 2005) the US soldiers considered mistreating the detainees a fun and a way to get rid of stress. There have been cases of self-harm among the people in custody; they also went on hunger strikes or even rebelled.

According to a report submitted to the US Southern Command, there were 350 cases of self-harm in Guantanamo in 2003 and 23 inmates attempted to hang themselves. In August, 2005 a group of 131 Guantanamo detainees went on a hunger strike protesting against the inhumane treatment.

The collective suicide of three detainees in Guantanamo in June, 2006 was an indication of outrageous human rights violations. One of the individuals who committed suicide was to be released because charges against him were not proven.

In April, 2005 a mass brawl started in the Camp Bucca prison at the South of Iraq because the US security refused to provide medical treatment to an inmate who fell ill. The US rejected numerous requests by the UN Human Rights Commission to let its representatives inspect the Guantanamo prison and investigate the cases of degrading treatment of inmates. Later, despite giving in to pressure, the US side established the rule of preventing any

contacts between the representatives of the Commission and the inmates. This was condemned internationally. Associated Press reported on November 16, 2005 that the US has detained over 83,000 foreign citizens since the beginning of the war on terrorism in 2001. 82,400 of them are in the US troops' custody in Iraq and Afghanistan, and 700 were transported to the Guantanamo detention facility. No charges against these people have been filed in the past four years and their cases have not been examined in court. By March, 2005 198 people died while in custody. Currently the US still detains 14,500 foreigners.

In 2005 a scandal was brought about by the "secret prisons" created by the US Government in other countries. The information about them caused resentment worldwide. On November 3, 2005 the New York Times published an article entitled "Secrets and Shame" criticizing the establishment of a network of secret CIA prisons outside the US territory. According to the Washington Post, the CIA set up secret prisons after September 11, 2001, with only a small group of officials in the White House, the Department of Justice, and the Congress knowing about them. Those prisons were located in Thailand, Afghanistan, at the Guantanamo base, and in a number of East European countries. Some 100 terrorism suspects were incarcerated in them. The inmates were held in dark underground wards, had no legal rights whatsoever, and nobody except for the CIA officers could talk to them or even see them. The Red Cross representatives were barred from contacts with these inmates.

Various torture techniques were used by the CIA to obtain information from the inmates. They were made to

stand in handcuffs for over 40 hours, left in wards with the temperature below 10C without dress, and showered with cold water.

In November 2005 a CIA officer told the guards at the Salt Pit prison in Afghanistan to undress an inmate, to chain him to the concrete floor, and to leave him for the night without a blanket. The inmate died of overcooling.

The British, German, and French media reported that CIA planes transporting terrorism suspects landed at a British military air base at least 210 times, and also traversed the German air space and occasionally landed in German airports at least 473 times. The CIA planes which used an airport near Paris also landed 6 times at Guantanamo.

The international community condemned the violations of the internationally recognized norms and human rights by the US Government. At a press conference, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour sharply criticized the US for infringing on human rights and transporting terrorism suspects without due legal procedures under the pretext of fighting terrorism. She remarked that these activities undermined the international agreement on the prohibition of torture. On December 20, 2005 the EU issued a warrant via the Milano court for an arrest of 22 CIA agents suspected of kidnapping people in Italy. The former US President Jimmy Carter characterized the mistreatment of inmates in Iraq, Afghanistan, and at the Guantanamo base as a disgrace and said that they contradict the US commitment to peace, social justice, civilian liberties, and human rights.

The extent of the abuse in this area is discussed in detail in the Amnesty International report published on April 5, 2006.

should close the Guantanamo detention center. An analysis of the list of Guantanamo inmates which was recently published in the US under public pressure shows that about 60 of the people in custody there were under 18 years of age and 10 people were 14-15 years old at the time of the arrest. Referring to the fact that in 2002 the use of some of the interrogation techniques allowed by the US Administration resulted in deaths of inmates the Committee recommended the US to recognize imitation of strangulation, the use of dogs for intimidation, and various forms of psychosexual impacts as tortures. Expressing a concern over numerous facts of sexual abuse and rape in the detention centers the UN experts demanded that the US authorities take adequate measures to prevent such incidents.

The Committee condemned the use of handcuffs on women at childbirth in the US prisons. The conditions of detention of minors in the US including a lack of complete isolation from adult criminals and the large number of children sentenced to life in prison were also criticized.

The leading human rights organizations including Amnesty International opine that the US lost the moral right to claim the leadership role in human rights and, on the contrary, provide other countries with an example of permissiveness and violations of the international laws.

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Certainly, the list of deficiencies of the US democracy is not limited to the data presented above. Their discussion could be continued. However there is something else that has to be emphasized. No country can say that it has no problems with human rights. All the more, attempts to impose one's own standards of democracy on others and to assume the role of a supreme arbiter are unacceptable.

The US compliance with the provisions of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was discussed in Geneva in May, 2006. When the report was considered in the UN Committee Against Torture the US delegation had to admit that there had been cases of detainee abuse at Guantanamo detention facility, in Iraq and Afghanistan and that 29 people died as a result. The US allegations that the abuse cases had been fully investigated caused a strong critique even by the US human rights activists who emphasized that only military subordinates were punished. The UN experts expressed concern with regard to the absence in the US Federal Code of the concept of torture consistent with Article 1 of the above Convention. It was noted that the US stipulations to the Convention in fact contradict the Convention itself and, consequently, are unacceptable from the viewpoint of the international law. It was also stressed that the UN Committee Against Torture does not share the US view that forced disappearances of people are not a form of torture and thus are not a violation of the Convention.

The Committee was seriously worried about the creation of secret detention facilities by the US abroad, where there are no legal guarantees for inmates whatsoever and there is no control of the way they are treated. As for the detention facilities at the Guantanamo military base (Cuba), in Iraq, and in Afghanistan the Committee's criticism was focused mainly on the fact that no criminal investigations were commenced in accord with the extraterritorial right against the officials who practiced tortures in these facilities. In addition to the recommendation to open such investigations the Committee also requested that the US

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