

**Item 4: General Debate on Human Rights Situations  
Requiring Council Attention**

**Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America**

**Human Rights Council 24<sup>th</sup> Session  
Geneva, September, 2013**

Mr. President,

The United States remains deeply concerned about deplorable human rights situations, especially in but not limited to **Syria and the DPRK**. We denounce these and other countries' targeted attacks against civilians, and we plan to address these cases in country specific resolutions this session. Additionally, the United States hopes that **Iran**'s new government will take urgent measures to address ending the practices of political imprisonment and the execution of minors.

We also highlight these countries of concern.

**Cuban** authorities continue to repress peaceful assembly and free expression. We reiterate our calls for Alan Gross's release and an independent investigation into the deaths of Oswaldo Payá and Harold Cepero.

**China** has increased arrests, forced disappearances, and extralegal detentions of public interest lawyers, Internet activists, journalists, religious leaders, and others who challenge official policies and actions, including Xu Zhiyong; has

increased Internet controls and press censorship; and limits religious freedom, particularly in Tibetan and Uighur areas.

The **Venezuelan** government continues to use the judiciary to intimidate and selectively prosecute political, union, business, and civil society leaders, and also harasses and intimidates independent media outlets and journalists. We call on the government to address these matters transparently and to adhere to international standards regarding human rights including conducting a full audit of the April elections.

**Belarus** restricts freedoms of expression and assembly, and suppresses civil society and democratic political participation. The government should immediately grant access to the Special Rapporteur and immediately and unconditionally release of all political prisoners and restoration of their political rights.

Poor prison conditions and abuse of detainees, torture, harassment of religious minorities, harsh restrictions on independent civil society activity, and denial of due process and fair trial are ongoing problems in **Uzbekistan** and **Turkmenistan**.

The United States also calls the Council's urgent attention to recent negative developments in several places.

The significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the **Central African Republic**, as well as reports of widespread human rights violations by Séléka elements, including: arbitrary arrests and detention, sexual violence against women and

children, torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, unlawful recruitment and use of children in conflict, and attacks against protected civilians.

Journalists across the Middle East lack sufficient government protections. In **Egypt, Iran, and Iraq**, journalists continue to face serious physical risks, harassment, and retribution from government or, as in the case of **Yemen and Libya**, from non-government actors. In some cases, they face obstacles imposed by restrictive media laws.

**Zimbabwe's** July 31 elections were seriously flawed. We urge the Government of Zimbabwe to implement the political reforms mandated by Zimbabwe's new constitution.

**Sri Lanka** should set visit dates and provide access for relevant Special Rapporteurs. We remain concerned by violence against religious minorities, excessive use of force by the military against peaceful protestors, violations of freedom of expression, and reprisals against human rights defenders, members of civil society, and journalists.

Thank you.

