

Tom Malinowski
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor,
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

July 22, 2014

Dear Assistant Secretary Malinowski,

We write, as representatives of state and local government, to commend the U.S. government on its robust engagement with the U.N Human Rights Committee during its recent review of U.S. compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and to share recommendations on how the federal government can support state and local actors working to promote and protect human rights.

The U.S. government's inclusion of three state and local officials in its delegation for the ICCPR review recognized the important role that state and local officials play in implementing the United States' human rights commitments. State and local participation enriched the conversation during the U.S. consultation with civil society and during the interactive dialogue with the Human Rights Committee, adding a breadth and depth of expertise to the discussions, including on issues of homelessness, domestic violence and LGBT discrimination.

The Human Rights Committee's Concluding Observations reflect that strengthening the U.S. human rights record requires cooperation and collaboration between all levels of government. They highlight numerous gaps between the protections afforded by the ICCPR and the reality in local communities. Addressing these gaps requires broad state and local awareness of human rights principles and their application to subnational entities.

During the interactive dialogue Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby made the laudable commitment to disseminate the Human Rights Committee's Concluding Observation to state and local actors. This commitment is in line with the Human Rights Committee's recommendations to "engage with stakeholders ... to give greater effect to the Covenant" and, "strengthen and expand [federal, state and local] mechanisms mandated to monitor the implementation of human rights...[and] provide them with adequate human and financial resources."¹

Today, we write to seek your support and guidance so we can do this to the best of our ability.

¹ Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: United States of America, para. 4(b);(d), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/USA/CO/4 (Apr. 23, 2014), *available at* <http://justsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/UN-ICCPR-Concluding-Observations-USA.pdf>.

An important step towards complying with the U.S. government's commitments and obligations is to widely disseminate treaty body recommendations, communicate how they relate to state and local policy, and provide guidance on practices that can address areas of concern. This type of proactive engagement will educate state and local officials on human rights standards and enhance our capacity to engage in activities that bolster human rights compliance. A number of federal agencies and officials are well-placed to effectively communicate the Committee's recommendations and give them meaning at the state and local level, including agencies with which state and local governments have prior relationships, such as the Department of Justice and others within the Equality Working Group.

We further urge the United States to include a diverse delegation of state and local agencies and officials in all future treaty reviews, including the upcoming reviews of compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and the Convention Against Torture, as well as the Universal Periodic Review process. This will both strengthen the reviews and help to ensure that the resulting recommendations translate into positive domestic practice at the local level.

In 2013, both the IAOHRA – the umbrella organization of state and local human rights agencies with a membership of approximately 160 agencies from across the country – and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, an organization representing cities of 30,000 or more, passed resolutions committing to promote and protect human rights locally. Yet, to implement human rights, the members of these organizations require federal support and guidance.

By taking the steps outlined above, the United States will make important strides towards improving human rights implementation across the country, at every level of government. The federal government should further provide dedicated staff, education, training, and funding to help state, county and municipal governments fully comprehend and engage with the United States' human rights obligations.

We stand ready to work in partnership with the federal government to help the U.S. meet its obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all. We look forward to working with you in these efforts and welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

Sincerely,

Ralph Becker, Mayor, Salt Lake City

Napolean A. Bell II, Executive Director, City of Columbus Community Relations Commission*

Rocco J. Claps, Director, Illinois Department of Human Rights

Kathay Feng, President, LA County Human Relations Commission & Entire Commission

Yolanda Francisco Nez, Salt Lake City Mayor's Office of Diversity and Human Rights

James B. Hovland, Mayor, on behalf of the Edina City Council (letter sent under separate cover)

Jasmine Jones, Chair, Human Rights and Human Relations Commission, City of Richmond, California

Jean Kelleher, President, International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA)

Mark Kleinschmidt, Mayor, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Lydia Lavelle, Mayor, Carrboro, North Carolina

Lee Leffingwell, Mayor, Austin, Texas

Gayle McLaughlin, Mayor, Richmond, California

Catherine Moore & Nika Dahlbacka, Co-Chairs, Seattle Human Rights Commission

Emily Murase, PhD, Executive Director, San Francisco Department on the Status of Women

Kitty Piercy, Mayor, Eugene, Oregon

Andrew Thomson, Chair, Eugene Oregon Human Rights Commission

Nichele Vaughan, Chair, Prince George's County Human Relations Commission

Beverly Watts, Executive Director, Tennessee Human Rights Commission

A.C. Wharton, Mayor, Memphis, Tennessee

Sabina Zunguze, Chair, Salt Lake City Human Rights Commission

**Individual agency signatories represent their agencies as a whole*

cc:

Mary McLeod, Principal Deputy Legal Adviser, Office of Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State

Scott Busby, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State

Kathleen Hooke, Assistant Legal Advisor for Human Rights and Refugees, Office of the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State

Jesse Tampio, Attorney-Adviser, Office of Human Rights & Refugees, Office of the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State

Meg Pickering, Attorney-Adviser, Human Rights and Refugees, Office of the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State

Karen Stevens, Senior Counsel, Civil Rights Division, Department of Justice

Todd Cox, Director, Office of Communications and Legislative Affairs, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Janet Hostetler, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

David Sullivan, Legal Adviser to U.S. Mission to the United Nations, U.S. Department of State

Luis Alvarez, Office of the Special Representative for Global Intergovernmental Affairs