



NEVER AGAIN COALITION

May 11, 2020

Prof. Mary Ann Glendon, Chair
Department of State Commission on Unalienable Rights
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Professor Glendon and Members of the Commission,

We the undersigned write to you to express our concern with the mandate of the Commission to review the role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy and determine which human rights are “unalienable” and which are “ad hoc.” A prioritization of freedom of religion or belief over the enjoyment of other human rights would constitute a violation of the United States’ binding obligations under human rights law.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was the result of the horrific experiences of the Second World War. It recognized that “disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind.”

The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action set forth that “All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated.” Human rights are indivisible and one right must not impede the others.

As an organization that works to prevent and end genocide and mass atrocities, we know all too well what the extreme consequences are of the denial of human rights to communities and individuals. It is imperative for the United States to uphold all human rights as outlined in the UDHR in order to remain a leader and example to international community. We fear that putting certain human rights above others will undermine decades of work to create a global society where all people are treated equally and will only serve to embolden oppressive regimes throughout the world.

Restricting human rights in U.S. foreign policy will only serve to limit the ability for our foreign service to advocate on behalf of persecuted populations. Such actions would lead to increased threats to U.S. national security and a State Department with little sway in the international community.

We urge you to maintain and uphold internationally recognized human rights as they have been defined by the UDHR and recognized in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The rights as defined therein are unalienable and must not be redefined.

Sincerely,

Lauren Fortgang, co-founder
Diane Koosed, co-founder
Ruth Anne Beutler
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