

US to UN: We Can Disregard International Human Rights Treaty



United Nations, March 15 (RHC-Commondreams)-- A United Nations panel called out the United States' litany of human rights failures as the U.S. sought to defend its reputation by saying that an international treaty outlying human rights doesn't apply to its military operations abroad.

The grilling happened Thursday in Geneva during the first of a two-day session held by the 18-member UN Human Rights Committee that looked at the United States' implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) — a U.S.-ratified treaty that bans torture, arbitrary killings and detention, and ensures the right to habeas corpus.

The Guardian reported that during the session, the US came under sustained criticism for its global counter-terrorism tactics, including the use of unmanned drones.

Yet the U.S. sought to shield itself from criticism, the New York Times reported, by saying that the rights treaty imposes no human rights obligations on American military and intelligence forces when they operate abroad.

The U.S. delegation told the panel that its drone strikes were “in compliance with international law.”

The U.S. is constantly talking about "human rights," Kimber Heinz, Organizing Coordinator with War Resisters League, told Common Dreams. But, as in the case of Venezuela, that language is manipulated to serve what could be disruptive for the current government. When the U.S. uses a human rights framework, "it's speaking out of both sides of its mouth," she added, and pointed to the example of the U.S. continuing to pour military aid into Egypt.

The UN panel also urged the U.S. to disclose the Senate report on the CIA torture and rendition program.

American Civil Liberties Union Human Rights Program Director Jamil Dakwar, who was in Geneva for the session, said: "The U.S. government now has an opportunity to reverse course, remedy rights violations, and take concrete actions like declassifying the Senate report on CIA torture."

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