

Human Rights Record of the US in 2005

**The Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of
China**

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I. On Life and Security of Person

For a long time, the life and personal security of people of the United States have not been under efficient protection. American society is characterized with rampant violent crimes. Across the country each year, 50,000 suicides and homicides are committed (Va. Violent Deaths Are Mostly Suicides, The Washington Post, October 12, 2005).

The U.S. Justice Department reported on Sept. 25, 2005 that there were 5,182,670 violent crimes in the United States in 2004. There were 21.4 victims for every 1,000 people aged 12 and older, which amounts to about one violent crime victim for every 47 U.S. citizens (Crime Rate Remains at 2003 Level, Study Says, The Washington Post, September 26, 2005).

According to figures released by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), murder increased by 2.1 percent across the United States during the first six months of 2005, compared with the same period of 2004. A total of 4,080 murders were reported in cities with more than 10,000 people, while homicides were up 13 percent in cities with a population of 10,000 or less (Murder Rate in Small Cities Jumps 13%, USA Today, Dec. 20, 2005).

The Washington D.C., with a population of less than 600,000, had 194 slayings in 2005 (D. C. Area Slaying Climbed In 2005, The Washington Post, Jan. 2, 2006). In Chicago, the number of various crimes exceeded 125,000 from January to September of 2005, including 352 murders, 11,564 robberies, 8,903 assaults and 534 arsons (<http://egov.cityofchicago.org>).

From January to mid-November of 2005, 334 persons were murdered in Philadelphia, exceeding the total number of murder victims in the city in 2004 (Philly: 334 Killings So Far This Year, Philadelphia Daily News, Nov. 14, 2005).

During the first half of 2005, 198 murders were reported in Los Angeles, 11 percent more than the same period of 2004 (Los Angeles Times, July 2, 2005).

Seventy-two people were murdered in Compton, California, with a population of only 96,000 (Compton Killings Highest in Years, Los Angeles Times, Jan. 2, 2006). Camden in New Jersey has become the most dangerous city in the United States, with its homicide rate more than ten times the national average and robbery rate, more than seven times the national average (Camden, N.J., Ranked Most Dangerous U.S. City, The Washington Post, Nov. 22, 2005).

The United States has the largest number of privately owned guns in the world. According to statistics released in June 2005 by the Brady Campaign, an organization aiming to prevent gun violence, there were approximately 192 million privately owned firearms in the United States (Firearm Facts, Issued by The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, June 2005, in: <http://www.bradycampaign.org/facts/factsheets/>).

A survey conducted by the Washington Post and the American Broadcasting Company showed that about ten percent of the surveyed were once shot, and 14 percent threatened by guns.

According to figures released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Justice Department in 2005, in the year 2004 the United States recorded 339,200 firearm-related crimes, including 11,300 murders, 162,900 robberies, and 165,000 assaults (Statistics Crimes Committed with Firearms, Issued by U.S. Bureau of Justice, in: <http://www.ojb.usdoj.gov/bjs>).

The Washington Post reported on Dec. 25, 2005 that every year nearly 12,000 Americans use guns to kill people. In the reports of crimes received by American police in 2004, 70 percent of the murders, 41 percent of the robberies and 19 percent of assaults on persons were committed with firearms.

The unchecked spread of guns has caused incessant murders. In February 2005, mother and husband of U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz were shot to death at home in Chicago.

In March, a rape suspect killed one judge and two others at a courthouse in Fulton County in Atlanta and hijacked four cars to escape.

On March 12, a gunman opened fire at a church service being held at the Sheraton Hotel in Brookfield, Wisconsin, killing seven people and injuring four.

On March 21, 17-year-old Jeff Weise killed his grandparents and went on a shooting rampage at the Red Lake High School in Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota, killing another eight persons including school security guard, teacher and students and injuring 14 others (CNN, March 21, 2005).

On April 25, a 14-year-old girl shot her father to death in Colorado. On Christmas Day of 2005, a man shot and killed his mother at home in the suburb of Washington and then drove eight miles to another home and killed three other people, before turning the gun on himself (Washington, AP April 30, 2005).

II. On Infringements upon Human Rights by Law Enforcement and Judicial Organs

There exist serious infringements upon personal rights and freedoms by law enforcement and judicial organs in the United States.

Secret snooping is prevalent and illegal detention occurs from time to time. The recently disclosed Snoopgate scandal has aroused keen attention of the public in the United States. After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. President has for dozens of times authorized the National Security Agency and other departments to wiretap some domestic phone calls. With this authorization, the National Security Agency may conduct surveillance over phone calls and e-mails of 500 U.S. citizens at a time. It is reported that from 2002 through 2004, there

were at least 287 cases in which special agents of FBI were suspected of illegally conducting electronic surveillance. In one of the cases, a FBI agent conducted secret surveillance of an American citizen for five years without notifying the U.S. Department of Justice. On Dec. 21, 2005, the U.S. Senate voted to extend the Patriot Act, a move that aroused keen concern of public opinion. The law makes it easier for FBI agents to monitor phone calls and e-mails, to search homes and offices, and to obtain the business records of terrorism suspects. (Senate Votes to Extend Patriotic Act for 6 Months, The Washington Post, Dec. 22, 2005). According to a report of the U.S. National Broadcasting Company on Dec. 13, 2005, the U.S. Defense Department had been secretly collecting information about U.S. citizens opposing the Iraq war and secretly monitoring all meetings for peace and against the war. According to a report of the New York Times, in recent years, FBI had been collecting information on large numbers of non-governmental organizations that participated in anti-war demonstrations everywhere in the United States through its monitoring network and other channels. The volume of collected information is stunning. (The Fog of False Choices, The New York Times, Editorial, Dec. 20, 2005). Among it, there are 2,400 pages of information on Greenpeace, an environmental group. On Jan. 9, 2006, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection announced that in the "anti-terrorism" fight the U.S. customs has the right to open and inspect incoming private letters, which again sparked protests. (The AP, Jan. 9, 2006.) On Jan. 17, 2006, the American Civil Liberties Union and the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights separately filed suits in U.S. district court for eastern Michigan and a federal court against the U.S. President and heads of security agencies for spying on U.S. citizens.

Police abuse is also very common in the United States. According to a report of the Los Angeles Times on July 14, 2005, Los Angeles police shot dead the 19-month-old daughter of a suspect when trying to arrest the suspect, which triggered public outcry. On Oct. 9, five New Orleans police officers battered a 64-year-old retired teacher on the street while trying to arrest him, and he suffered injuries. (AP, Oct. 9, 2005) The incident caught the attention of public opinion. On Dec. 26, a New Orleans Police officer fired at least six shots at a black man carrying a knife and killed him. Cases of police abuse are usually hard to get just settlement. According to a report of the Los Angeles Times on March 31, 2005, only eight out of more than 200 charges against police mistreatment and abuse were resolved, and the rest were either shelved or settled privately.

There exist obvious injustice and frequent rights infringements in the judiciary system. In 2005, the U.S. media disclosed several cases of citizens wrongly convicted. After 24 years in prison, Robert Clark Jr. from Georgia was released after a DNA test proved him innocent. Clark's was one of the longest incarcerations served by the 164 people who have been exonerated by DNA testing. (After 24 Years in Prison, Man Has a Reason to Smile, the New York Times, Dec. 8, 2005). On the night of Dec. 21, 2005, the CNN Larry King Live program interviewed four convicted felons that have recently been proven innocent by DNA evidence after having stayed more than 10 years behind bars. Well-known Los Angeles criminal defense attorney Mark Geragos said during the program that he had seen studies that there are up to 20 percent of wrongful convictions in the United States. (Many Convicted Felons Have Been Proven Innocent by DNA Evidence, CNN Larry King Live, Aired Dec. 21, 2005.) A report of the U.S. Death Penalty Information Center released in October 2005 said the U.S. death penalty system is "woefully short of justice," because of "misconduct in misinforming the juries." (AFP, Oct. 18, 2005)

The United States proclaims to be a "paradise of freedom," yet the total number and ratio of its people behind bars both rank the first in the world. According to data released by the statistics bureau of the U.S. Justice Department on Oct. 23, 2005, the total number of people incarcerated in the United States was 2,267,787 at the end of 2004. This meant an incarceration rate of 724 per 100,000, up 18 percent from ten years earlier and 25 percent higher than that of any other nation. (Study Notes Upswing In Arrests of Women, the Washington Post, Oct. 24, 2005.) According to a survey of the New York Times, the number of people sentenced to life in prison had doubled in the United States over the past ten years. (Packing Prisons, Squandering Lives, the Baltimore Sun, Oct. 21, 2005.) From 2003 to 2004, the number of prisoners grew at a rate of 900 each week. In the first half of 2004, the number of newly incarcerated in the 50 states grew 2.3 percent over the same period of the previous year to 48,000.

As the prisons were packed, the situation of prisoners worsened. On Dec. 31, 2004, 24 state prison systems were operating at or above their highest capacity. The federal system was 40 percent over capacity. (The Nation's Prison Population Continues Its Slow Growth, U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>) As the government cut back on expenditure of

prisons, some state prison systems reduced input on medical care for prisoners. As a result, a large number of prisoners were infected with tuberculosis or hepatitis. In April 2005, a 44-year-old male inmate died in a prison of New York for lack of timely treatment. In recent years, hundreds of inmates suffered head injuries from maltreatment in New York City alone. In a Rikers Island jail of New York, an inmate was punched on the head by a prison guard and he lost the sight in one eye; an inmate had his eardrum broken and the cheekbone of another inmate was fractured from police maltreatment. (In City Jails, A Question of Force, the New York Times, Oct. 30, 2005.) In Phoenix city, inmates were kept in tents and forced to undertake various sorts of labor, fed with only two meals a day and bereft of any entertainment. (El Universal of Mexico, Aug. 26, 2005.) In August 2005, a Qatar student that had been detained for two years without indictment described the living conditions in the prison: no guarantee of basic life necessities, long-time confinement in a very tiny ward with the longest period lasting 60 days, handcuffed and fettered even in the ward, including during bath. During Hurricane Katrina, between Aug. 29 and Sept. 1, 2005, correctional officers from the New Orleans Sheriff's Department abandoned 600 inmates in a prison, as many were immersed in chest and neck level water and left without food, water, electricity, fresh air, or functioning facilities for four days and nights.

Sexual infringement is quite common in prisons. According to a report released by the U.S. Department of Justice in June 2005, an estimated 8,210 allegations of sexual violence were reported by correctional authorities, of which almost 42 percent involved staff-on-inmate sexual misconduct. A report of the Human Rights Watch said that 21 percent of inmates in seven Midwestern prisons in the United States suffered sexual violence perpetrated by inmates of the same sex.

III. On Political Rights and Freedom

The United States has always boasted itself as the "model of democracy" and hawked its mode of democracy to the rest of the world. In fact, American "democracy" is always one for the wealthy and a "game for the rich."

The democratic elections in the United States, to a great extent, are driven by money. During the mayoral election of New York City in November 2005, billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg spent 77.89 million U.S. dollars of his fortune for re-election. That came to more than 100 U.S. dollars per vote. The

election was termed by the Associated Press as the most expensive mayoral re-election in history. In the race for governor of New Jersey, the dueling multimillionaires spent 75 million U.S. dollars combined, with 40 million dollars by Jon S. Corzine, who won the election. Taking into account the 60 million U.S. dollars he spent on a Senate seat in 2000, Corzine had spent 100 million U.S. dollars in five years for elections. According to a survey, in Washington D.C. a U.S. senator needs about 20 million U.S. dollars to keep the seat in the Senate. The Washington Post criticized the U.S. political system in an editorial: "But a political system that turns elective office into a bauble for purchase is not a healthy one."

Decisions of the U.S. Congress and the Administration are deeply influenced by money. It is known to all that in the United States, various firms and interest groups hire public relations and consulting companies to lobby the Congress and the Administration, spending money to influence their decisions and win government contracts. On Jan. 4, 2006, mainstream U.S. media carried reports on super lobbyist Jack Abramoff pleading guilty to three felony charges including a conspiracy involving corruption of public officials and agreeing to cooperate with U.S. prosecutors in investigating members of Congress and aides suspected of corruption. The case is the largest power-for-money scandal in American politics for several decades. It was reported that 20 members of Congress and their aides have been involved in this unusual large-scale scandal. But the Abramoff case is just a tip of an iceberg. According to the Washington Post and the British Observer, lobbying has become a great growth industry with huge profits in Washington. Currently, the number of registered lobbyists has reached 34,750, that comes 60 to 1 compared with the total number of the U.S. federal officials elected. Meanwhile, the lobbyists handle more than two billion U.S. dollars of funds a year. Washington downtown's K Street with many lobbying firms is called "the road to riches" and "the fourth largest power" next to the President, the Congress and the Court. From 1998 to 2004, lobbyists spent 13 billion U.S. dollars to promote realization of their clients' wishes. In 2004, 2.1 billion U.S. dollars was spent on lobbying the federal government and the Congress, and 3 billion U.S. dollars for elections of the President and members of Congress in the United States. The USA Today revealed that since 2000, 5,410 trips of Congress members were financed by undisclosed sources and Congress members have taken 16 million U.S. dollars in privately financed trips. It's a "revolving door" for lobbyists to turn into politicians and retired politicians from

government service to engage in influence peddling in the private sector. It was reported that since 1998 more than 2,200 former U.S. government employees have become lobbyists; among them are 273 former White House staff members and 250 former Congress members and department heads from the Executive branch.

On Oct. 24, 2005, a national public opinion survey released by the U.S. News and World Report revealed that 73 percent Americans believe their leaders are out of touch with the average person; 64 percent of Americans feel that their leaders are corrupted by power; 62 percent think that leaders seek for increase in personal wealth. A joint Gallup Poll by the USA Today and CNN found job approval for Congress, which has a Republican majority, has fallen to 29 percent, the lowest level since 1994; 49 percent American adults say they believe "most members of Congress are corrupt." Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark said it is an offense to democracy to describe the United States as a democracy.

The United States flaunts its press freedom but scandals about the U.S. government blocking and manipulating information came out continually. The New York Times reported on March 13, 2005 that the United States is in "a new age of prepackaged TV news." The federal government has aggressively distributed prepackaged news reports to TV stations. At least 20 federal agencies, including the Defense Department and the Census Bureau, have made and distributed hundreds of television news segments in the past four years.

The U.S. military pays Iraqi newspapers and journalists for the so-called information operations campaign. The Los Angeles Times reported on Nov. 30, 2005 that the U.S. military troops have been writing articles burnishing the image of the U.S. mission in Iraq, sending them to a Washington-based firm, which translates them into Arabic and places them in Baghdad newspapers. It said the military also has purchased an Iraqi newspaper and taken control of a radio station "to channel pro-American messages to the Iraqi public." Other reports said that U.S. army officers created an outfit called the Baghdad Press Club that pays members as much as 200 U.S. dollars a month to churn out positive pieces about American military operations. The Washington Post in an editorial called these activities against freedom of the press as "planted propaganda."

The U.S. government's ban on different voices through various means has been condemned by the international community. On Nov. 22, 2005, British newspaper the Daily Mirror, citing a "top secret" memo on April 16, 2004 from Downing Street, said the U.S. government wished to bomb the headquarters of Arabic TV station Al-Jazeera in Doha, Qatar, during the Iraqi War to block information about the real situation of the war and remove its negative influence on the U.S. side; the revelation resulted in protests by all the Al-Jazeera staff in more than 30 countries and criticism from the International Federation of Journalists. On Nov. 27, British Observer said Al-Jazeera offices in Baghdad and Kabul had all been bombed by the U.S. military and its journalists detained, threatened, abused and harassed by the U.S. military during the Iraqi war. In fact, U.S. crude intrusion into press freedom happened repeatedly. On April 8, 2003, cameraman Jose Couso of the Spanish Telecino television station was shot dead by U.S. soldiers. After Couso's death, the Spanish court issued warrants for the Spanish police and International Criminal Police Organization to arrest and extradite three suspected U.S. soldiers immediately. On Aug. 28, 2005, U.S. forces opened fire at a team of Reuters reporters; one Reuters soundman was shot several times in the face and chest, and he was killed on the spot. Two Iraqi reporters who rushed to the spot were also arrested and forced to exposure to the scorching sun. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the United States is holding four Iraqi journalists in detention centers in Iraq and one journalist of Al-Jazeera, at the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo bay, Cuba. None of the five have been charged with a specific crime. In July 2005, the New York Times reporter Judith Miller was sentenced to jail for refusing to disclose her source. Covering the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a photographer for Canadian Toronto Star daily was hurled to the ground by New Orleans police. The police grabbed his two cameras and removed memory cards. When he asked for his pictures back, the police insulted him and threatened to hit him. A reporter for a local newspaper of New Orleans was also attacked while covering a shoot-out between police and local residents. The police detained him and smashed all of his equipment on the ground.

IV. On Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The United States is the richest in the world, but its poverty rate is also the highest among the developed countries. In the United States, problems such as

poverty, hunger and homelessness are quite serious, and the economic, social and cultural rights of working people are not guaranteed.

A study of eight advanced countries by London School of Economics in 2005 found that the United States had the worst social inequality, Reuters reported on April 25, 2005. The poverty rate of the United States is the highest in the developed world and more than twice as high as in most other industrialized countries (Newsweek, The Other America, Sept. 19, 2005). In recent years the fortunes of the rich have continued to rise in the United States. According to two new studies by Spectrem Group, a Chicago-based wealth-research firm, and the Boston Consulting Group, millionaire households (excluding the value of primary residences) in the United States controlled more than 11 trillion dollars in assets in 2004, up more than 8 percent from 2003 (Millionaire Ranks Hit New High, Wall Street Journal, May 25, 2005). Meanwhile, the income of ordinary employees in the United States has seen a sharp decline, causing the increase of poor population. The data issued by the U.S. Census Bureau said that the nation's official poverty rate rose from 12.5 percent in 2003 to 12.7 percent in 2004, with the number of people in poverty rising by 1.1 million from 35.9 million to 37 million, which means one in eight Americans lived in poverty. Poverty rates in cities such as Detroit, Miami and Newark exceeded 28 percent. The New York Times reported on Nov 22, 2005 that in 2004 3.9 million families had members who were undernourished.

Homelessness is a serious problem. The USA Today reported that a snapshot tally conducted in June 2005 found 727,304 homeless people nationwide, meaning about one in 400 Americans were without a home (National Count of Homeless Puts Issue In Human Terms, USA Today, Oct. 12 2005). According to a survey by the United States Conference of Mayors in 24 cities including Chicago, Boston and Los Angeles, requests for emergency shelter in 2005 increased in the survey cities by an average of 6 percent from a year earlier, with 71 percent of the cities registering an increase. Requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 12 percent, with 76 percent of the cities registering an increase. More than 3,100 families with nearly 6,000 children apply for emergency shelter in Washington D.C. annually, with many sleeping on the streets or in cars or bus stations (Lifting up the Poor, Letters To the Editor, Washington Post, Oct. 28, 2005). The Los Angeles Times reported on June 16, 2005 that Los Angeles County has become "the homeless capital of America,"

with the average number of vagabonds or people in shelters hitting 90,000 a day, including 35,000 people chronically homeless.

The rights of American labor are not guaranteed. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor, in November 2005 the number of unemployed persons in the United States was 7.6 million, with an unemployment rate of 5 percent. Nearly 20 percent of the unemployed had been out of work for six months or more (Union: Job Cuts at GM 'Unfair', USA Today, Nov. 22, 2005). And about 3.6 million people were out of unemployment insurance (The New York Times, Jan. 1, 2005). Low pay, inadequate work conditions and lack of work protection are also a problem. The Washington Post reported on Aug. 3, 2005 that employees in American meatpacking plants face hard work in tough settings, and they suffer cuts, amputations, skin disease, permanent arm and shoulder damage, and even death from the force of repeated hard cutting motions. The China Press in New York City reported on Nov. 1, 2005 that employees in most New York restaurants lacked basic labor protection. They usually work overtime, with low pay and have hardly any health insurance. About 38 percent of them have been burned or scalded, and nearly half have experienced cut injuries. On Oct. 31 last year, transit workers in southeastern Pennsylvania of Philadelphia went on strike, due to disputes over health care insurance with the employer. In New York City, the transit workers union began a citywide strike on Dec. 20 last year after failing to reach a deal with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in negotiations on wage and pension issues.

Per capita medical expenses in the United States are higher than in any other countries, however, the crisis of health insurance for workers is quite prominent. Statistics show that in 2004, the overall costs of health care increased 8.2 percent over 2003, but 45.8 million people or 15.7 percent of the total population were out of health insurance coverage, an increase of 800,000 people from the previous year. New York City alone had nearly two million residents without health insurance, with two thirds of them on payrolls. Each year 18,000 Americans die due to lack of medical treatment. A survey released by Kaiser Family Foundation in September 2005 found that only 60 percent of employers offered health insurance coverage, down from 69 percent five years earlier. In 2005 the average annual premium for family coverage hit 10,880 dollars. In coming years rising health care costs will price more and more people out of coverage. On Nov. 21, 2005 U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill of

budget reduction by 50 billion dollars, including funding for health care, food aid to the poor and support to children's projects, which suggests worsening of living conditions for the poor.

V. On Racial Discrimination

The United States is a multi-ethnic nation of immigrants, with minority ethnic groups accounting for more than one-fourth of its population. But racial discrimination has long been a chronic malady of American society. Black Americans and other ethnic minorities are at the bottom of American society and their living standards are much lower than that of whites. According to *The State of Black America 2005*, the income level of African American families is only one-tenth of that of white families, and the welfare enjoyed by black Americans is only three-fourths of their white counterparts. In 2004, the poverty rate was 24.7 percent for African Americans, 21.9 percent for Hispanics, and 8.6 percent for non-Hispanic whites. In New Orleans, 100,000 of its 500,000 population live in poverty, with the majority of them being black Americans. The homeownership rate for blacks is 48.1 percent compared with 75.4 percent for whites. The *Washington Post* reported on April 11, 2005 that in 2004, about 29 percent of African Americans who bought or refinanced homes ended up with high-cost loans, compared with only about 10 percent of white Americans. Statistics released by the Federal Reserve in September 2005 also indicated that according to the 2004 mortgage data, the average incidence of higher-priced home purchase loans was 32.4 percent among African-Americans, 20.3 percent among Hispanic whites and 8.7 percent for non-Hispanic whites. The *Los Angeles Times* quoted on July 14, 2005 a report on the *State of Black Los Angeles* as saying that black Americans were behind other ethnic groups in income, housing, medical care and education. Blacks had the lowest median household income of 31,905 dollars, compared with whites at 53,978 dollars. Although just 10 percent of the population, blacks were estimated to make up 30 percent or more of the homeless.

Minorities face discrimination in employment and occupation. According to a report of the U.S. Department of Labor, in November 2005 the black unemployment rate was 10.6 percent, compared with the white unemployment rate at 4.3 percent. Black male earnings were 70 percent of white males, and black females earnings, 83 percent of their white counterparts. Ethnic minorities

are often kept away from high-end occupations. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission quoted a report as saying that the employment discrimination rate was 31 percent for Asians and 26 percent for African Americans, and the discrimination against Muslims doubled after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. The China Press reported that although Africans, Hispanics and Asians accounted for 57 percent of the work force in New York City, only less than 19 percent of them have got senior management positions, compared with whites who dominate 76 percent of them, or even 97 percent of such positions in some government departments.

The rates of colored people without health insurance are higher than that of whites. The uninsured rate was 19.7 percent for blacks and 32.7 percent for Hispanics, that is to say nearly one of every three Hispanics in America had no health insurance. The black life expectancy was six years less than that of whites, and the mortality for black infants aging below one year doubled that for such white infants. According to the Washington Post, 76.3 out of every 200,000 blacks were found infected with HIV/AIDS, eight times higher than whites. Blacks account for more than half of all new HIV/AIDS infections in America and black women account for an astonishing 72 percent of all new cases among women. More than 80,000 American blacks die annually due to lack of health insurance, with the death rate of middle-aged black males twice that of the same white group.

Racial discrimination in America's justice and law enforcement is serious. William J. Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education, once said that the only way to lower the crime rate in America was for all black women to have abortion. In America, black criminals tend to get heavier penalties than their white counterparts. According to the State of Black America 2005 issued by the National Urban League, blacks who are arrested are three times more likely to be imprisoned than whites once arrested, blacks are sentenced to death four times more often than whites, and a black person's average jail sentence is six months longer than a white's for the same crime. A December 2005 study by the University of Maryland indicated those who killed a white victim were 2 to 3 times more likely to be sentenced to death than those who killed anon-white; but black offenders who killed white victims were nearly 2.5 times more likely to be sentenced to death than white offenders who killed white victims and 3.5 times more likely to be sentenced to death than black offenders who killed black victims.

Although blacks are just 12.2 percent of the American population, 41 percent of American prisoners detained for more than one year are blacks, and 8.4 percent of all black men between the ages of 25 and 29 are behind bars. According to reports issued by the Human Rights Watch and other organizations, following the Sept. 11 attacks, at least 70 people, all but one Muslim, were held as "material witnesses" under a narrow federal law that permits the arrest and brief detention of "material witnesses". One-third of the 70 confirmed material witnesses were incarcerated for at least two months, some were imprisoned for more than six months, and one actually spent more than a year behind bars. According to a report by the Washington Observer weekly in its 42nd issue in 2005, Chinese American Muslim chaplain James Yee was charged with crimes of espionage and mutiny, which potentially carry the death penalty. Because there was no evidence to support the allegations, the charges were later quietly dropped. The case was quoted by the media as one of the most serious judicial wrongs in American history.

Violent crimes against ethnic minorities have been increasing in America. According to a FBI report issued in October 2005, of the 9,528 victims of hate crimes in 2004, 53.8 percent were victims of racial prejudice, and 67.9 percent were blacks. Among the hate crime offenders, 60.6 percent were whites. According to statistics, blacks are twenty times more likely than whites to be a victim of hate crimes. In Los Angeles, 56 percent of hate crimes were targeted at blacks.

VI. On Rights of Women and Children

The United States does not have a good record in safeguarding the rights of women and children.

Women in the United States do not share equal rights and opportunities with men in politics. Despite the fact that women account for 51.1 percent of the U.S. population, they hold only 81 or 15.1 percent of the 535 seats in the 109th U.S. Congress, including 14 or 14 percent of the 100 Senate seats and 67 or 15.4 percent of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives. Only eight (16 percent) of governors of 50 U.S. states are women. No women of color have ever been governor of a U.S. state. Just 14 of the mayors of America's largest 100 cities are women, accounting for 14 percent of the total. By November 2005, there were

only 81 women serving in statewide executive office, 25.7 percent of the total 315 working posts. Of the 7,382 people serving in the state legislatures, 1,668 are women, accounting for 22.6 percent. A research by the Inter-Parliamentary Union showed the United States ranked 61st in terms of women's representation in national legislature or parliaments out of over 180 directly electing countries, down from the 58th in December 2003.

Women in the United States have a higher unemployment rate than men, and lower pay for the same work. A survey by the U.S. Census Bureau said the median earnings of women and men in 2004 were 31,223 and 40,798 U.S. dollars, respectively. The female-to-male earnings ratio was 77 percent. Yearly earnings of women business owners were only 49 percent of men counterparts. In 2004, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received 24,249 charges of sex-based discrimination, and 4,512 charges of pregnancy-based discrimination.

Poverty rates are highest for families headed by single women. In 2004, 28.4 percent of households headed by single women were in poverty. More and more women and children became homeless. In the city of Pasadena, Southern California, the number of homeless women and children reached 701 in 2005, increasing by 42.7 percent over 2003 and accounting for 57.6 percent of the homeless population in the city. Homeless women and children became the largest homeless population, surpassing that of single men for the first time.

U.S. women often fall victim to domestic violence. Statistics from American Institute on Domestic Violence showed each year in the United States 5.3 million women are abused, and 1,232 women are killed by an intimate partner. A news report said one out of every three American women would fall under the influence of domestic violence in her life.

American women face high risks of sexual offense. The FBI reported in October 2005 that during 2004, approximately 94,635 females nationwide were victims of forcible rape, which means that 63.5 out of every 100,000 women suffered from forcible rape. This figure also represents an increase of 0.8 percent from 2003. Women are sexually harassed while at work. In 2004 the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received 13,136 charges of sexual harassment, with 84.9 percent of them filed by women.

According to an investigation by the Pentagon released on Dec. 23, 2005, up to 6 percent of the women at the Army, Navy and Air Force academies said they experienced sexual assault during the 2004-2005 school year, and about half or more said they were sexually harassed. In the Reserve Forces and National Guard units, 60 percent of women and 27 percent of men were sexually assaulted or harassed during their service. And 11 percent of women were raped.

The U.S. prisons saw a surging number of female prisoners who had received bad treatment. A report by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics on April 24, 2005 said by the end of June 30, 2004, the number of female prisoners reached 103,310, increasing by 2.9 percent from a year earlier. In 2004, female prisoners in federal and state prisons accounted for seven percent of the total, up 4 percent from 2003, or nearly twice the increase rate of male prisoners. Nearly 50 percent of female prisoners said they were sexually assaulted. A total of 8,210 allegations of sexual violence were reported in U.S. correctional facilities during 2004, and the correctional authorities substantiated nearly 2,100 incidents of sexual violence, with women accounting for the majority of victims. American children's living conditions are worrisome. In terms of the child poverty index, the United States ranked next to the last among 22 developed nations in the world. Statistics released by U.S. Census Bureau on Aug. 30, 2005 showed children accounted for nearly one third of the 37 million poverty population in the country. And 1.35 million U.S. children had experienced homelessness.

Among the population aged under 18, those who lived in poverty accounted for 30 percent of the total in Washington D.C., 27 percent in Mississippi and Louisiana, 26 percent in New Mexico, and 24 percent in West Virginia. In New Orleans, 40 percent of children in urban areas lived in poverty.

American children's health has seen a decline, and death rates of infants and juveniles are increasing. Nationally, 29 percent of children had no health insurance at some point in the last 12 months, and many got neither checkups nor vaccinations. The China Press based in New York City said in a report on May 5, 2005 that over the past 20 years researchers funded by the U.S. government had tested anti-HIV/AIDS medicine on hundreds of children living in welfare homes with no basic protection or supervision by any independent organization. This practice brought great harm to the health of the children, and some of them died during the treatment.

One third of children in the United States were born out of wedlock, and half of the children live in single-parent families. At present, four million U.S. children live with jobless parents, facing such problems as domestic violence, melancholia, and drug and alcoholic addiction.

American juveniles often fall victim to violent crimes. More and more students go to school with knives or other weapons. In 2005, the number of students found with knives and other weapons in Maryland schools was 2,845, a jump of 63 percent over the past five years. Virginia schools also reported 2,278 cases of confiscated weapons in 2003 to 2004. And Washington D.C. reported 148 weapon incidents from 2004 to 2005.

The Washington Post reported in a feature story in August 2005 that a survey of 325 Latino seventh- and eighth-graders from across Montgomery County discovered 12 percent of the 11-to-13-year-olds had carried a weapon such as a knife or a club (one percent had carried a gun); 38 percent had gotten into a physical fight; 27 percent had stayed home because they felt unsafe going outside; and 16 percent had been threatened or injured by someone with a weapon. Twenty percent had been involved in gang-related activities; 12 percent said they had been members of a gang.

Frequent on-campus violence incidents threatened the safety of 26.4 million U.S. students aged between 12 and 16. Statistics showed 12 juveniles died of firearm-related crime everyday in the United States. A report by The Los Angeles Times on March 4, 2005 said more than 70 percent of sixth-graders in Los Angeles had experienced or witnessed violence incidents, and this proportion reached as high as 90 percent in some areas.

The U.S. judicial protection for children's rights is far lower than international practice. A report released by the U.S. Department of Justice showed the number of juveniles behind bars in the United States reached 102,000 by the end of 2004. The United States is one of the few countries where a crime committed by a juvenile results in a life sentence without any possibility of parole. According to a Human Rights Watch report, 93 percent of youth offenders serving life without parole were convicted of murder, and an estimated 26 percent were convicted of "felony murder." This means that anyone involved in the commission of a serious

crime during which someone is killed is also guilty of murder, even if he or she did not personally or directly cause the death. About 9,700 inmates were serving life sentences for crimes they committed before they turned 18. At least 2,225 child offenders are serving life without parole sentences in U.S. prisons, compared with a combined total of 12 in other countries; 16 percent of the child offenders were between 13 and 15 years old at the time they committed their crimes, and an estimated 59 percent were sentenced to life without parole for their first-ever criminal conviction. At present, the number of child offenders serving life without parole sentences in the United States is three times of 15 years before. Child offenders often experienced abuse in prisons, and staff-on-inmate sexual assaults at correctional institutions for juveniles were almost 10 times more than in jails for adult offenders. The United States is one of the few countries that sentence child offenders to death. To date, six states in America still have no minimum age for death sentence.

In 2004, a total of 63 juveniles aged 17 or under were sentenced to death. At present, there are around 3,500 prisoners on death row in the United States, with 72 of them sentenced for crimes they committed before they turned 18.

VII. On the United States' Violation of Human Rights in Other Countries

Pursuing unilateralism on the international arena, the U.S. government grossly violates the sovereignty and human rights of other countries in contempt of universally-recognized international norms.

The U.S. government frequently commits wanton slaughters of innocents in its war efforts and military operations in other countries. The USA Today newspaper on Dec. 13, 2005 quoted a 2004 study published in the medical journal The Lancet as saying that it was estimated that about 100,000 Iraqis, mostly women and children, had died in the Iraqi war launched by the U.S. government in 2003. The year 2005 also witnessed frequent overseas military operations targeting at civilians by the U.S. forces, causing quite a number of deaths and injuries. On July 4, 2005, the U.S. forces killed 17 civilians, including women and children, in their air strikes in Konarha Province of Afghanistan. On Aug. 12, a U.S. military armored patrol vehicle fired at people coming out of a mosque in a town in the suburbs of the Iraqi city of Ramdi, killing 15 Iraqis, including eight children, and injuring 17 others. On Aug. 30, U.S. jet fighters launched several sorties of air

raids against an area near the western Iraqi border town of Qaim, causing at least 56 deaths, including elderly and children. On Nov. 21, U.S. troops fired at a civilian vehicle in northern Baghdad, killing a family of five, including three children. On Jan. 14, 2006, U.S. military aircraft struck a Pakistani village bordering Afghanistan, killing at least 18 civilians and triggering widespread anti-U.S. demonstrations in Pakistan.

In 2005, news of prisoner abuse by the U.S. forces again hit headlines, following their 2004 prisoner abuse scandal that stunned the world. To extract information, the U.S. forces in Iraq employed various kinds of torture in their interrogations. They abused the Iraqi detainees systematically, including sleep deprivation, tying them to the wall, hitting them with baseball bats, denying their access to water and food, forcing them to listen to extremely loud music in completely dark places for days running, unleashing dogs to bite them for amusement and even scaring them by putting them in the same cage with lions (reports from The Washington Post, The New York Times, the Washington Weekly and other news media). A report by The Human Rights Watch in September 2005 said that U.S. soldiers regarded prisoner abuse as "amusement" and a way "to relieve stress." Due to the unbearable abuse, many detainees maimed themselves, went on hunger strikes and even rioted. According to a report issued by the South Command of the U.S. military, there occurred 350 self-maiming cases in the prison of Guantanamo, Cuba, in 2003, with 23 prisoners seeking to hang themselves in one week of August. In August 2005, 131 prisoners in Guantanamo went on a hunger strike to protest inhuman treatment. In April the same year, a riot broke out in Camp Bucca prison in south Iraq due to the U.S. warden's refusal to treat a sick prisoner. The United States has time and again rejected the requests of the UN Commission for Human Rights special mechanism to visit Guantanamo to investigate the incidents of prisoner abuse. And after yielding to pressure, the U.S. side made it a rule that the UN delegation should not have any contacts with the detainees there, incurring international condemnation.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States wantonly apprehended terrorism suspects worldwide, flaunting the banner of "anti-terrorism." An AP story on Nov. 16, 2005 said that since the start of the anti-terrorism war in 2001, the United States had detained more than 83,000 foreign nationals, with 82,400 of them under the custody of the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Iraq. And 700 captives were shipped to Guantanamo. Over the past four years, the U.S. has not brought

any indictment against them or brought them to court hearing. By March 2005, 108 people had died in custody. Up to date, there are still 14,500 foreign nationals under U.S. custody.

In 2005, the scandal of the "secret prisons" set up overseas by the U.S. government was revealed, causing an international uproar. The New York Times carried an article titled Secrets and Shame on Nov. 3, 2005, criticizing the overseas secret prison network concealed by the CIA. According to The Washington Post, after the Sept. 11 attacks, the CIA set up covert prisons, only known to a handful of officials in the White House, Justice Department and the Congress, in Thailand, Afghanistan, Guantanamo and some Eastern European countries, detaining about 100 people believed to be terrorism suspects by the United States. Kept in dark and underground cells, the prisoners in the "black sites" have no legal rights and no one outside the CIA can talk with or even see them. Even officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross are forbidden to have any contacts with the captives.

To obtain intelligence from the captives, the CIA employed various kinds of torture, such as forcefully grabbing the shirt front of the prisoner and shaking him, slapping and belly slapping. Prisoners were forced to stand, handcuffed and feet shackled, for more than 40 hours, and they were also left to stand naked in a cell kept at around 10 degrees Centigrade and constantly doused with cold water. The torture also included binding a prisoner to a board with plastic or paper wrapped over his face and water poured over him (the British newspaper The Independent, Dec.4, 2005).

In November 2002, a CIA officer ordered guards of the Salt Pit prison in Afghanistan to strip naked a detainee, chain him to the concrete floor and leave him there overnight without blankets. He froze to death (The Washington Post newspaper).

The CIA frequently transfers terrorism suspects to other countries for torture and interrogation aboard a secret aircraft. The British, German and French media reported that the CIA plane carrying terrorism suspects had landed in a British military airfield at least 210 times, and crossed German airspace or landed in German airports at least 473 times. The CIA aircraft which took off and landed near Paris also landed and took off in the Guantanamo naval base for six times.

The U.S. government's violations of internationally-recognized norms and human rights incurred strong international condemnation. At a press conference, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louis Arbour sharply criticized the United States for infringing human rights by setting up secret prisons and transferring terrorism suspects without going through legal procedures under the pretext of fighting terrorism, noting that such acts were eroding the global ban on torture. On Dec. 20, 2005, the European Union, through a local court in Milan, Italy, issued warrants for the arrest of 22 CIA agents suspected of kidnapping in Italy. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter described the prisoner abuse by the U.S. military in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo as "embarrassing," and going against the rudimentary American commitment to peace, social justice, civil liberties and human rights.

The facts listed above show a poor human rights record of the United States, which forms not only a sharp contrast with its image of a self-claimed "advocate of human rights," but also disaccord with its level of economic and social development and international status. The U.S. government ought to first clean up its own record of human rights before qualifying itself to comment on human rights situations in other countries, let alone arrogantly telling them what to do.

To respect for and protect human rights is a necessity and indicator of human civilization, and to promote human rights is the common responsibility of all countries and a major theme of international cooperation. No country in the world can claim to have a perfect state of human rights, nor can any country stay outside the course of human rights development. The issue of human rights should become a theme of social development in all countries and of international cooperation, rather than a slogan for exporting ideologies or even a tool of diplomacy to fix others out of one's own political needs.

For years, the U.S. government has ignored and deliberately concealed serious violations of human rights in its own country for fear of criticism. Yet it has issued annual reports making unwarranted charges on human rights practices of other countries, an act that fully exposes its hypocrisy and double standard on human rights issues, which has naturally met with strong resistance and opposition from other countries. We urge the U.S. government to look squarely at its own human rights problems, reflect what it has done in the human rights field and take concrete measures to improve its own human rights status. The U.S. government

should stop provoking international confrontation on the issue of human rights, and make a fresh start to contribute more to international human rights cooperation and to the healthy development of international human rights cause.