

Human Rights Record of the United States in 2003

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Foreword

On February 25, 2004, the State Department of the United States released its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 (called the "reports" thereafter). As in previous years, the United States once again acted as "the world human rights police" by distorting and censuring in the "reports" the human rights situations in more than 190 countries and regions across the world, including China. And just as usual, the United States once again "omitted" its own long-standing malpractice and problems of human rights in the "reports". Therefore, we have to, as before, help the United States keep its human rights record.

I. On Life, Freedom and Personal Safety

The United States has long been in a violent, crime-ridden society with a severe infringement of the people's rights by law enforcement departments and with a lack of guarantee for the life of people, their freedom and personal safety.

The United States is a country plagued most seriously by violence and crimes. According to the statistical figures released in June 2003 by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a total of 11.9 million criminal cases were reported in 2002 in the United States, including homicides, rapes, robbery and theft. Of these cases, 19,940 cases were reported in Detroit, where 2,073 people committed crimes in every 100,000 people. In Baltimore, where 2,055 people committed crimes in every 100,000 people. With regard to personal offenses, cases of murders and rapes rose by 0.8 percent, and 4.0 percent, respectively, over 2002(see The Sun, USA on June 18, 2003).

On Sept. 15, 2003, US Surgeon General Richard Carmona admitted at a workshop that the United States has always ranked first in the world in terms of homicide incidence. In August 2003, the US Department of Justice acknowledged in a report that a total of 15,586 homicide cases occurred around the country in 2000, as against 15,980 in 2001, and 16,110 in 2002, indicating a rising trend year by year (see the edition of USA Today on Aug. 25, 2003).

In a report released by the FBI in December 2003, the FBI said the overall incidence of offenses in the U.S. somewhat dropped, whereas the number of people murdered across the country grew by 1.1 percent during the first half of 2003 (see the edition of USA Today published on Dec. 16, 2003).

From January to August of 2003, 166 homicides were reported in Washington D.C., up 5.1 percent year on year. In Chicago, which is known as America's "homicide capital", there were 648 homicides in 2002, compared with 599 in 2003, or an average of 22.2 people victimized in every 100,000 residents (AP dispatch from Chicago on Jan. 1, 2004). In New York, the number of people murdered in 2003 amounted to 596 (AP dispatch from Chicago on Jan. 2, 2004). In California, the number of murder cases for 2002 went up 11 percent. The US Justice Policy Institute held that the existing legal system could not ensure the safety and health of community residents.

The United States ranked first in private ownership of guns, resulting in drastic rise in gun-related crimes. According to a survey of crime victims, 350,000 criminal cases involving the use of guns were reported in the United States in 2002, and guns were used in 63 percent of the 15,980 killings in 2001. On Aug. 27, 2003, a jobless man carrying a gun broke into a car part supplying company, killing seven of his former colleagues. Statistical figures from US National Center for Health Statistics showed that 56.5 percent of Americans who committed suicides in 2000 with the use of guns, involving 16,586 people (see Gun Violence, Related Facts. www.jointogether.org).

Improper management of firearms led to the frequent occurrence of juvenile offenses involving the use of guns. At least 18 people in American public schools were reportedly killed in violence with 50 others wounded in mid Aug. of 2003. According to data from US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 50 percent of the murderers in campus shootings in the United States used guns owned by their families or friends, while over 80 percent of the guns used by students for suicides came from their families or friends (Most Guns Used in School Shootings from Family, Friends, www.jointogether.org).

Unrestrained evil social forces and widespread drug abuse endangered the people's life and safety. According to a report released by US National Youth Gang Center, there were altogether 21,500 sinister gangs in the United States in 2002 with a combined membership of 731,000. In April 2003, an innocent woman was killed in a gang shootout in New York. Police had to impose a state of citywide emergency in the summer of 2003 due to frequent gang-related violence (see the edition of USA Today on Dec. 16, 2003).

Drug-related crimes have been on the rise, with new characteristics involving a growing number of gangs, intensified violence and trans-national smuggling and collaboration with terrorist groups. The rate of crimes induced by drug abuse has risen year by year. Relevant data released by the US Department

of Justice showed that over half of the inmates in federal jails have something to do with drug-related crimes (see Washington Post on July 28, 2003).

According to the outcome of a survey released by Washington D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams, 60,000 people out of the 600,000 population in Washington used drugs and indulged in excessive drinking, causing an annual economic loss of 1.2 billion US dollars. Half of those people arrested on charge of violence in Washington D.C. took drugs (see Washington Post on Dec. 2, 2003).

In recent years, the number of AIDS patients has also increased partly due to the widespread drug abuse. Statistical figures released by the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that the number of people diagnosed as AIDS carriers across the United States in 2002 rose by 2.2 percent over the previous year to reach 42,136 (see Washington Post on July 28, 2003).

The infringement of lawful rights constitutes a malignant obstinate disease of American society. Random assaults committed by the police resulted in the frequent occurrence of tragedies with heavy casualties. The New York City Police was reported for several willful shooting cases when chasing suspects in January 2003. Four people were killed by the police in the city from Jan. 1 to 5 last year. In Dec. 2003, a black man named Nathaniel Jones was beaten to death by six policemen in Cincinnati, causing a great uproar against police brutality across the country.

According to an AP report, a woman in the city of Detroit had one of her fingers cut off and another finger injured by the police simply for a dispute with them in a parking lot. The report said the police also boxed her ears and tore her hair.

The United States issued the Patriot Act in name of land security and anti-terrorism after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack, and many substantial contents of this act encroached upon rights and freedom of citizens, especially the people of ethnic minorities. Under the authority of the Patriot Act, the government departments are empowered to wiretap phone calls of citizens, trace their online records, read their private mails and e-mails. The FBI is even allowed to keep a watch on people's reading habits. They check the booklists of what people borrow from libraries, so as to judge whether they have been influenced by terrorism. A resolution passed by Cambridge, Massachusetts, explicitly noted that the civil rights of the American people are being jeopardized by the Patriot Act and, therefore, the Sun in Aug. 2003 set forth an appeal for "freedom to read" (see the Sun on Aug. 18, 2003).

The United States claim itself as a paradise for free people but the ratio of inmates in the United States has remained the highest in the world. The number of inmates in the country exceeded 2.1 million in 2002, a year-on-year rise of 2.6 percent, according to the statistical figures released by the Department of Justice in July 2003. The jails nationwide receive 700 new inmates every week in the U.S. where 701 out of every 100,000 people are in prison (see Washington Post on July 28, 2003).

Inmates have received inhumane treatment in the overloaded jails. An International Herald Tribune story said the states of Virginia, North Carolina, Minnesota, Iowa, Texas and Arizona had lowered the food supply standards of inmates so as to curb the huge government budget deficit. They reduced the calorie of each meal in jail and cut three meals a day to two on weekends and holidays. According to a report

by Amnesty International, more than 700,000 inmates were held in high security prisons and there they are compelled to stay in wards for 23 hours a day and even longer, subjected to ruthless and inhuman treatment and humiliation. Last year, at least three inmates were hit to death by prison guards with guns of high voltage electric prods (2003 Report: United States of America, Amnesty International, www.amnestyusa.org).

Sexual harassment and encroachment are common in jails in the United States. A report issued by Human Rights Watch in Sept. 2003 said that one in five male inmates in the country had faced forced sexual contact in custody and one in 10 has been raped. For women inmates, they are objects of sexual assault of jail guards, and one fourth of the women inmates are sexually assaulted in a few jails (see Editorial, Doing Something about Prison Rape, [http:// www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org), 26/09/2003).

Nine girls in a juvenile delinquent center of the state of Alabama accused the guards of assaulting and raping them and compelling them to have forced abortion. They also said male guards watched girls take bath and unclothe themselves for so-called frisk. They had to have sex with male guards in the hope for better treatment, for instance, to get a can of cola or food.

According to another Human Rights Watch report, one in six US inmates suffer various kinds of mental illnesses. Many of them suffer from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and serious depression. The proportion of inmates with mental illness in the prison population is over three times higher than in the general population (see United States: Mentally Ill Mistreated in Prison, www.hrw.org/2003/10/US102203.htm). The total population of these patients has reached as high as 200,000 to 300,000. "Prisons have become the nation's primary mental health facilities," said Human Rights Watch. The prisoners with mental illness are likely to be picked on, physically or sexually abused and manipulated by other inmates. For example, a female inmate named Georgia, who is both mentally ill and retarded, has been raped repeatedly in an exchange for small items such as cigarettes and coffee.

II. On Political Rights and Freedom

The presidential election, often symbolized as US democracy, in fact is the game and competition for the rich people. Presidential candidates have to raise money far and wide for their expensive campaign cost and most of the donors are big companies and millionaires. President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney had raised as high as 113 million US dollars in their 2000 presidential campaign, a record in US history, and the fund raising is expected to reach 200 million US dollars for this year's re-election campaign (see Britain's Independent newspaper on Jan.20, 2004).

Statistical figures from the Center for Responsive Politics showed that Lockheed Martin Corp., the country's biggest arms dealer, has been the biggest political donor. The company had donated 10.6 billion US dollars for political campaigns in the United States from 1999 to 2000 and has been the main donor to the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives as well as one of the top ten donors to the Committee on Appropriations of the House.

The so-called "freedom of press" in the United States has also been brought under intensive criticism. According to an investigative report of the Sonoma State University in the United States, freedom of press, speech and expression of opinion in the United States is amid a crisis. An increasing number of US media organizations are getting involved in false reporting or cheating scandals. On June 5, 2003, two chief editors of the New York Times resigned after their role in a plagiarism scandal was exposed. John Barrie, head of Plagiarism.org in Oakland, California, claimed that "every newspaper in this country is not doing due diligence" and "everybody's got this problem".

Meanwhile, the US government has exercised an extremely tight control over news media, which went to the extreme during the 2003 U.S.-led war against Iraq. During the war, the US government had tried every means to prevent the press from getting timely and true information and had wielded its hegemony to override the journalistic principle of "faithful and unbiased reporting". Peter Arnett, a veteran reporter with the US National Broadcasting Company (NBC), was fired simply because he voiced some of his personal views on the Iraq war. News coverage by international media in Iraq also often fell prey to US restrictions and crackdown. Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has accused US troops in Iraq of frequent "obstruction of journalists trying to do their jobs in Iraq" and described the number of attacks on press freedom there as "alarming" (see Reuters story on Oct. 20, 2003).

In January 2004, the U.S.-installed Iraqi Interim Governing Council issued an order to ban the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV station from covering any activity of the Council's members between January 28 and February 27. A book named "Black List", co-written by 15 American reporters, has warned that America's press freedom is facing danger. In an interview with the French newspaper Le Figaro, Kristina Borjesson, one of the book's authors and a former reporter with the CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) and CNN (Cable News Network), said that US authorities had controlled all information to be spread by the media while journalists had degenerated into the government's stenographers (see French newspaper Le Figaro on May 8, 2003).

The U.S. has also time and again launched attacks on news media organizations and journalists in Iraq. In one of such attacks on April 8, 2003, the US troops bombed the Baghdad branch of an Arab TV station and killed one cameraman on the spot.

III. On Living Conditions of US Laborers

Although the United States is the world's No. one developed nation, the US government has to date refused to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It is apathetic to the rights and interests of ordinary workers in economic, social and cultural aspects, leading to serious problems such as poverty, hunger and homelessness.

The disparity between the rich and the poor keep widening in the United States. A 2003 report by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the US Congress acknowledged that the gap between the rich and the poor in the country today is wider than anytime in nearly 70 years, with the wealth of the country's richest one percent population exceeding the overall possessions of the needy, who account for 40 percent of the total population. In 2000, the rich people's wealth makes up 15.5 percent of the

country's overall national income, as against 7.5 percent in 1979 (according to BBC report on Sept. 25, 2003).

A report by the US Federal Reserve also showed that between 1998 and 2001, the wealth gap between the country's richest and poorest had widened by 70 percent (see Britain's Guardian report on Jan. 24, 2003).

Certain policies of the US government, instead of helping narrowing the country's wealth gap, have aggravated the rich-poor disparity and led to an unfair distribution of wealth. According to a report by the US Environmental Working Group in 2003, the agricultural policy of the US government has ensured 70 percent of the government subsidies go to ranch owners, resulting in a yawning income gap between ranch owners and ordinary farmers and pushing many farmers to the verge of bankruptcy (ABC report on Oct.9, 2003).

The population living in need and hunger in the United States has been on a steady rise. According to statistics from the 2003 economic report of the US Census Bureau, the impoverished population in the United States had been increasing for two consecutive years, reaching 34.6 million, or 12.1 percent of the total population, in 2002, up 1.7 million over the previous year. The country's poverty ratio in 2002 had risen by 0.4 percentage points over the previous year. Among the impoverished population, the number of extremely needy people had risen to 14.1 million from the previous 13.4 million, and the proportion of children in need had gone up to 16.7 percent in 2002 from 16.3 percent in 2001. Since 2001, the number of needy families in the United States has been growing at 6 percent a year, and there are now 7.3 million impoverished families in the country, which means 31 million people are facing the threat of hunger. In the 25 leading metropolises of the United States, the number of people who need emergency food aid has increased by 19 percent on average, while the number of people who live on charity food coupons, or those who have to queue up for free food distributions, has surged to 22million (see Spain's El Mundo on May 19, 2003).

In October 2003, the US Department of Agriculture released a report, which showed that in 2002 there were 12 million American families worrying about their food expenditures and 3.8 million families with members who actually suffered from hunger. On December 18, 2003, an annual survey report released at the US Conference of Mayors showed that in the 25 cities surveyed, the number of people seeking emergency food aid in 2003 had increased by 17 percent on average over 2002. Moreover, 87 percent of the surveyed cities believed that the number of such people would continue to rise in 2004.

The homeless population continues to rise. According to information released by the US National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, more than 3 million people were homeless in the United States in 2002 (Homeless and Poverty in America, www.nlchp.org). Washington D.C. has the highest rate of homelessness of any city in the United States, with an estimated 20,000 people having experienced homelessness and nearly 400 families having applied for emergency shelters in 2002 (A snapshot of Homelessness in the Metropolitan, www.naeh.org). In April of 2002 alone, 38,476 people in New York spent their night in aid centers, including 16,685 children. According to a survey released by the US Conference of Mayors in December 2003, requests for emergency shelter assistance rose by an

average of 13 percent in the past year; 88 percent of the cities surveyed predicted that the situation would be even worse in 2004.

Recently, the US Christian Science Monitor reminded the United States that it should regard "a home for every American" as the most rudimentary human right. Chicago Coalition for the Homeless said the government was unable to provide the basic subsistence guarantee for people, and that the local government had violated international human rights law by forcibly taking over 8,000 local residential houses in five years.

There is a lack of work safety. According to US laws, only the accidents of industrial injuries resulting from "intended" violation of safety rules by the employers are eligible to be submitted to the judicial authorities. Even when alarming cases occur, the employers are seldom confirmed as "intended" and rarely face public prosecution. The New York Times quoted a surveyed report of the US Occupational Safety & Health Administration as saying that in 20 years from 1982 to 2002, there were 1,242 cases involving the death of workers caused by the employers' "intended" violation of safety rules, yet 93 percent of the cases were not brought to the court. In these two decades, there were a total of 2,197 accidents caused by employers' violation of safety rules and resulted in death of the workers in the United States, and the combined prison terms for employers involved were less than 30 years.

The situation of health insurance worsened. According to a report released by the US Census Bureau in September 2003, the number of Americans without health insurance climbed by 5.7 percent over 2001, to reach 43.6 million in 2002, the largest single increase in a decade. Overall, 15.2 percent of the Americans were uninsured in 2002 (see Washington Post on Sept. 30, 2003).

Based on a survey, the ratio of employees uninsured in big US companies rose from seven percent to 11 percent during the 1987-2001 period (see Wall Street Journal on Oct. 22, 2003). More and more people cannot afford medical treatment. In Nebraska, 250,000 single mothers lost free medical care they previously enjoyed, and in Arizona, approximately 60,000 children were no longer covered by free medical care (see Spain's El Mundo on May 19, 2003).

IV. On Racial Discrimination

Forty years have elapsed since late civil rights leader Martin Luther King made the famous speech "I Have a Dream", yet the equal rights pursued by the American blacks and minority ethnic groups remained an unattainable dream today.

Racial discrimination in the United States has a long history with age-old malpractice. It has been permeated into every aspects of society. According to an investigative report released by the United Nations, the blacks and colored people received twice or three times more severe penalties than the whites for the crimes of the same kind; the number of black people who received death penalty for killing white people was four times that of the white people for killing black people. In state prisons nationwide, about 47 percent of the inmates were black people, and the 16 percent were people of Latin American ancestry. The blacks accounted for 13 percent of the total US population, yet 35 percent of the people

arrested for drug abuse crimes were blacks and 53 percent of the people that were convicted for drug abuse crimes were blacks.

At present, more than 750,000 black inmates were in US jails, or over 35 percent of the total number of inmates in the country; approximately 2 million black people were disciplined or put under various forms of surveillance; 22 percent of black males in the 30-34 age group had jail records, while the white inmates only make up three percent; 36 of 1,000 black females have possibilities of being jailed in their lives, while only five of 1,000 white females have such a possibility.

The poverty rate and joblessness rate of the US blacks remained high. According to statistics of the US Department of Labor, the white people's unemployment rate in the U.S. was 5.2 percent in November 2003, while the rate was as high as 10.2 percent for the blacks, almost twice that of the whites (Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age, www.bls.gov/news.release/empgit.to2.htm, 05/12/2003).

According to statistics of the US Census Bureau, poverty rate among the blacks reached 24.1 percent in 2002, up 1.4 percentage points over the 22.7 percent rate in the previous year; 20.2 percent of the blacks were without health insurance; average annual income of median black families was 40 percent less than the ordinary median US families (see USA Today on Oct. 3, 2003).

Racial discrimination exists on the US real estate market, too. In 2002, the US federal government received a total of 25,246 discrimination accusations on housing market, 72 percent of which were from the families of black people, disabled people or those families with children, according to a report released by the National Fair Housing Alliance in April 2003. Discrimination over the birth place nationality of house purchasers rose from 10 percent in 2001 to 12 percent in 2002 (see the Sun newspaper, USA on Aug. 17, 2003). Black people usually spend more money than white people on housing purchase, but their houses are not as good as those of white people and they have to accept loans with higher interests. The market value of houses bought by black people with same amount of money is only 82 percent of those of white people, and houses with high mortgage interest rate in black people communities are five times more than those in white people communities, the Sun newspaper quoted the US Department of Housing and Urban Development as saying in on July 3, 2003.

Apartheid recurs at school. More than one third of American students of the African origin are studying in schools where over 90 percent of students are non-white people, according to an investigation made by Harvard University in 2004. Since 1988, many schools abandoned the compulsory racial integration in class due to a series of court verdicts and changes in federal policies. According to a verdict passed in 1991 by the Supreme Court, the resumption of community schools was allowed and it was no longer mandatory to carry black students from other communities by school bus, which led to the disappearance of black students in white people's schools. Meanwhile, wealthy white people in some southern areas withdrew from publicly-owned school systems and sent their kids to private schools where most students were white. Racial differentiation in US middle and elementary schools is serious, noted a commentary of the New York Times on Jan. 21, 2003. Those black students in schools where most are white students often feel unwelcome, discriminated or even scared (The New York Times on Jan.21, 2003).

Less proportion of colored races can go to universities than white people. According to a report issued by the America Council on Education in Oct. 2003, 40 percent of black people and 34 percent of Hispanic-Americans of the age group from 18 to 24 can go to university, while 46 percent of white people can go to university (www.accnet.edu/news/press_release/2003/10october/minority_report.cfm).

According to the census result in March 2003, the income of black people with bachelor degree was 24.5 percent lower than white people with same degree, that of black people with master degree 21.2 percent lower than white people with same degree, and that of black people with doctoral degree 28.1 percent lower than white people (see USA Today on Sept. 9, 2003).

The US discrimination toward immigrants tends to become serious. After the Sept. 11 incident, the US congress adopted anti-terrorism act containing items infringing on human rights. The act permits the arrest of immigrants with indefinite duration, checks on all secret files, inspection in public and private occasions, wiretapping of phone conversations and secret investigations. In June 2003, US Procurator-General Glenn Fine revealed in his investigative report that after the Sept. 11 incident, US authorities detained 762 foreign immigrants for an average of about three months in excuse of violation of immigrant law, but later investigation showed they had nothing to do with the Sept. 11 incident (see Washington Post on June 3, 2003).

In the Operation Landmark launched in Chicago from Dec. 2002 to May 2003, the backgrounds of some staff working in public places such as airports and high-rises were surveyed secretly, with some immigrants being detained and deported without criminal acts, and the government refused to publicize any details of this special policy toward immigrants and information about the detainment and deportation of immigrants. According to the report, this kind of "secret policing" activity in excuse of national security infringed on the civil rights and freedom of millions of immigrants in the United States (see Los Angeles Times on May 29, 2003).

Another report shows that 1,200 immigrants were detained in the United States with no indictment, and at least 484 people are still in custody. To date, the US government still refuses to reveal the identity of these people (see a report by Britain's Independent newspaper on June 26, 2003).

Immigrant children are maltreated. According to a report from the Amnesty International, at least 5,000 children going to the United States to find relatives, or avoid abuses and mistreatment, wars and recruiting by domestic rebels were put into custody in the United States. These children were jailed together with adult inmates, and were abused in ways of frisk by being unclothed, handcuffed and flogged. These children aged one to ten years from all over the world were often imprisoned for months, or even for years. A kid jailed in a detention center in Pennsylvania was beaten up for minor faults such as saying "Can I use the toilet" instead of "May I use the toilet." Staffs in a detention house in Texas will take back blankets and mattress and switch off air-conditioners just because children make faults (Reuters dispatch from Miami on June 18, 2003). The United States reportedly jailed a number of prisoners regarded as illegal fighters, three of whom were 13 to 15 years of age (see Britain's Guardian newspaper on April 24, 2003).

V. On Conditions of Women, Children and Elderly People

Little can be spoken of the human rights record in the U.S. in view of protecting the rights of women, children, elderly people and other special disadvantaged social groups.

American women cannot enjoy the equal rights with men to take part in government and political affairs. Statistics from the Center for American Women in Politics indicated that in 2003, women hold 59, or 13.6 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives, and 14, or 14 percent of the seats in the Senate. Despite an increase in the number of women seated in state legislatures in 2003, they made up only 22.3 percent of the total 7,382 state legislators in the U.S. (Women in Elected Office 2003 Fact Sheet Summaries, www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts/Officeholds/cawpfs.html).

Women are not entitled to equal treatment with regard to employment and income. American women are still largely pigeonholed in "pink collar "jobs, such as secretaries, sales women and restaurant attendants, according to a report released by the American Association of University of Women in May, 2003 (www.aauw.org/about/newspress_releases/230505.cfm).

Statistics from the US Department of Labor indicated that in 2002, the average weekly income for women aged 16 and above were 530 US dollars, or 77.9 percent of the 680 dollars for their male counterparts. Analysis by the department noted that there were twice as many as women whose earnings were below the Federal minimum wage, compared with men. Among the whites and Hispanics, women are more likely than men to become low income earners (Bureau of Labor Statistics of the US Department of Labor, www.bls.gov)

There has been serious domestic and sexual violence against women. According to figures released by the White House in October 2003, a total of 700,000 incidents of domestic violence were reported in the U.S. in 2001. One-third of women murdered each year are murdered by their current or former husbands or partners (National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 2003, by George W. Bush, www.whitehouse.gov)

According to a survey conducted by the US National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 92 percent of American women cite domestic and sexual violence as one of their top worries. One out of every three women experiences at least one physical assault during adulthood, and only one out of every seven cases of domestic violence, however, drew the attention of the police. A report by the US military on sexual harassment scandals in the US Air Force Academy showed that 109 out of the 579 female cadets, or almost 20 percent, that were interviewed said they had been sexually harassed and assaulted in different ways and to varying extent.

The protection of children provided in the U.S. is far below the international standards. The United States is one of the only two countries in the world that have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since 1980s, all the states in the U.S. have lowered the age of criminal culpability against juvenile offenders, and in some states, juvenile offenders aged 10 even stood on trial in courts for adults.

According to the Department of Justice, 27 out of the 50 US states have set minimum age of criminal culpability. Most states such as California set the age at 14, states like Colorado at 12 and two states including Kansas at 10. In states where there is no minimum age of criminal culpability, judges can decide to try juvenile offenders in juvenile courts or transfer them to ordinary criminal courts according to the seriousness of the crimes. In 2002, a 15-year-old student, who killed two of his classmates in a shooting rampage, was sentenced to 50 years in prison. In the same year, Brian Robertson, an 18-year-old student in a high school in Oklahoma was arrested for his writing a novel with "extraordinary violent" plots on a school computer and if convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison.

The U.S. is the country that has handed most of the death penalties to juvenile offenders and carried out the executions in the world. According to a report released by the Amnesty International on Jan. 21, two-thirds of the documented executions of juvenile offenders in the world occurred in the U.S. in the past decade and more. Since 1990, there have been a total of 34 documented executions of juvenile offenders worldwide, and 19 of them happened in the U.S. (an AP dispatch from London on Jan. 2, 2004).

While many countries around the world are abolishing executions of minors, some politicians in the U.S. are asking to lower the minimum age for death penalty, and the Federal Supreme Court has even set the age at 16. Up to date, there are 80 such juvenile inmates on the death row waiting to be executed (a Prensa Latina from Havana on Aug. 4, 2003).

Among the developed nations, the United States ranks the first in terms of the number of children living under the poverty line and the last in the life expectancy of its children (Britain's Guardian newspaper on Nov. 3, 2003). According to statistics released by the US Census Bureau in September 2003, 10.4 percent of all US minors lived in poverty by the definition of income in 2002 (Poverty: 2002 Highlights, www.census.gov), up to 13 million people (Britain's Guardian newspaper on Nov. 3, 2003).

Of all the children, 11.6 percent could not afford health insurance. Of the millions of homeless population in the United States, kids account for a considerable proportion. The US Conference of Mayors said in its 2003 annual report that of all homeless families, 40 percent were families with children, and among all the families applying for food subsidies, 59 percent of them had at least one kid. And according to the United Nations Children's Fund, of the 27 well-off nations in the world, the United States ranks the first in the number of deaths of its children as a result of violence and negligence (see Reuters dispatch from Geneva on Sept. 18, 2003).

The under-aged population is under threat in terms of physical and mental health. According to statistics from the US Federal Government, of all the kids under the age of 18, 10 percent suffer from psychological illness to varying extent, some to the point of committing crimes. But only one fifth of them have been provided with medical treatment (see the edition of USA Today on Oct. 26, 2003). Violent acts plaguing the US public media are bringing adverse impact to the minors. Statistics show that before coming of age at 18, kids and youngsters could be exposed to at least 40,000 murder scenes and 200,000 other acts of violence in various public media (an AP dispatch on Feb. 5, 2004). They are so accustomed to fist fights, bloody killings that some have been worshipping for violence, which gives rise to more malignant acts of violence in the country accordingly.

Children are often the victims of sexual assault. In recent years, more and more scandals have come to light that children were harassed, molested and raped by priests in the U.S. In June 2003, USA Today reported that in the past 18 months, of all the 46,000 clergymen in the United States, around 425 were dismissed by churches for crime allegations involved, including the crime of sexual assault against children (edition of USA Today on June 17, 2003). According to other reports, at least 1,000 people were arrested in the United States for accused acts of eroticism targeting at kids since June 2003. Of all the arrested, 400 were charged with the crime of making and spreading erotic materials relating to children via the Internet.

The senior citizens are prejudiced against and mistreated, which led to a higher rate of suicides among them. In the United States, people aged over 65 account for 13 percent of the national population, and of all the people who committed suicide, the senior population make up 19 percent. According to a report of the Christian Science Monitor, of every 100,000 people between the age of 15 to 24, 10.3 such people killed themselves in 1999, and the number rose to 15.9 for the elderly people above the age of 65, which was nearly 50 percent higher than the national average level. All the numbers boiled down to the fact that more than 6,000 senior citizens committed suicide in the United States in 1999.

VI. On Infringement upon Human Rights of Other Nations

In recent years, the United States has been practicing unilateralism in the international arena, indulging itself in military aggression around the world, brutal violation of sovereign rights of other nations. Its image has been tarnished by numerous misdeeds of human rights infringement in other countries.

The United States tops the world in terms of military expenditure, and is the largest exporter of arms. Its military spendings for the 2004 fiscal year reaches 400.5 billion US dollars, exceeding the total amount of defense budgets of all other countries in the world in summation. The New York Times reported on September 25, 2003, that the United States export of conventional arms accounted for 45.5 percent of the world's arms trade volume in 2002, ranking the first in the world. And according to a Capitol report, the United States sold 8.6 billion US dollars worth of conventional arms to the developing nations, or 48.6 percent of all the arms procured by the developing world in 2002.

The United States has been active in sabre-rattling and launching wars. It is the No. One in terms of gross violation of other countries' sovereign rights and other people's human rights. The United States has resorted to the use of force against other countries 40 times since 1990s. Well-known US journalist and writer William Blum said in his recent book "Rouge State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower" that since 1945, the United States has attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, suppressed over 30 national movements, in which millions of people have lost their precious lives and many more people been plunged into misery and despair.

In March 2003, without authorization by the United Nations, the United States unilaterally waged a large-scale war on Iraq based on its claim that the Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In its wanton and indiscriminate bombing of Iraq, many bombs of the US army were dropped on residential areas, shopping malls and civilian vehicles.

According to an article carried by Britain's Independent newspaper in January 2004 titled "George W. Bush and the real state of the Union," in the war on Iraq by then, more than 16,000 Iraqis had been killed, of which 10,000 were civilians (see the edition of Britain's Independent on Jan. 20, 2004). On April 2, 2003, the US armed forces attacked a Baghdad maternity hospital installed by the Red Crescent, a local market and other adjacent buildings for civilian use, claiming a lot of human lives and injured at least 25 people. Five cars were bombed and drivers were burned to death inside their cars (see the edition of San Diego Union-Tribune, U.S. on Aug. 5, 2003).

Based on a report by Britain's Independent newspaper on Feb. 8, 2004, more than 13,000 civilians, many of them women and children, have been killed so far by the US army and its allied forces in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars in the wake of Sept. 11 incident in 2001, "making the continuing conflicts the most deadly wars for non-combatants waged by the West since the Vietnam War more than 30 years ago." Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to former US President Jimmy Carter in the 1970s, said "it is a serious matter when the world's Number One superpower undertakes a war claiming a *causis belli* that turns out to have been false." (Washington Post on Feb. 2, 2004).

Depleted uranium (DU) shells and cluster bombs were used recklessly during wars in violation of international laws. In December 2003, the Human Rights Watch disclosed in a report that the 13,000 cluster bombs US troops used in Iraq contained nearly 2 million bomblets, which have caused casualties of over 1,000 people. The "dub" cluster bombs that did not blast on the spot continued to menace the lives of innocent people. The US troops also used large quantities of depleted uranium shells during their military operations in Iraq. The quantity and residue of pollutants from these bombs far exceeded those of the Gulf War in 1991. Through a spokesman for the Central Command, the Pentagon acknowledged that ammunition containing depleted uranium was used during the Iraq war. Indeed, Doug Rokke, ex-director of the Pentagon's depleted uranium project, former professor of environmental science and onetime US army colonel, said after the Iraq War that the willful use of DU bombs to contaminate any other nation and bring harms to the people and their environment is a crime against humanity (see Spain's Uprising newspaper on June 2, 2003).

Another investigation report said that in the Iraqi capital Baghdad alone, numerous places were found to have the amount of radioactive materials that exceeded the normal level by 1,000 times. The US troops also used "Mark-77" napalm, a kind of bomb banned by the United Nations, in Iraq, which negatively impacted on environment there. On July 7, 2003, Dato'Param Cumaraswamy of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, openly voiced his shock at the fact that the US Government did not abide by international human rights rules and humanism in its counter-terrorism military actions. (United Nations Rights Expert "Alarmed" over United States Implementation of Military Order, United Nations Press Release, July 7, 2003, www.un.org)

The United States put behind bars 3,000 Taliban and Al-Qaida inmates in Afghanistan, 680 alleged die-hard Al-Qaida elements from 40-odd countries in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, and an undefined number of prisoners in the US army base on Diego Garcia island on the India Ocean leased from Britain. All these prisoners locked up by the U.S. were not indicted officially (Britain's Independent newspaper on June 26, 2004). The New York Times quoted a high-ranking official from the US Department of Defense

on February 13, 2003 as saying that the United States planned to jail most of the prisoners currently in Guantanamo for a long time or indefinitely. The US Government said the detainees in Guantanamo were not "prisoners of war" and therefore not subjected to the protection of the Geneva Conventions.

"The main concern for us is the US authorities ... have effectively placed them beyond the law," said Amanda Williamson, spokeswoman for the Washington office of the Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross. (Overseas Chinese newspaper in U.S., Oct. 11, 2003). A report entitled *People the Law Forgot*, carried on the British Guardian in Dec. 2003, depicted the plight of the 600-odd foreigners detained by the US in Guantanamo Bay. These people had been detained in Guantanamo Bay since January 2002, where they were tortured both mentally and physically (Britain's Guardian newspaper on Dec. 3, 2003). The detainees were given only one minute a week for taking shower and only through a hunger strike did they win the weekly five-minute shower time and the weekly ten-minute break for physical exercises. At a clandestine interrogation center of the US troops in Bagram of Afghanistan, prisoners were even more tortured. They were forced to stand or kneel down for hours in varied awkward positions while wearing hoods over their heads or colored glasses. Exposed to strong light 24 hours a day, they could not go to sleep (Britain's Independent newspaper on June 26, 2003).

The U.S. is the nation with the most troops stationed overseas, about 364,000 troops in over 130 countries and regions. The violations of human rights against local people frequently occurred. In 2003, the US military authority received 88 reports about "misbehavior" of its overseas troops. On May 25, 2003, a soldier of the US Marine Corps in Okinawa of Japan wounded and raped a 19-year-old Japanese girl. The soldier was sentenced to three and a half years in prison. In the past dozen years, such cases occurred frequently in Okinawa and up to 100 US soldiers have been reported of committing crimes. On February 7, 2004, Australian police detained three soldiers of the US Marine Corps suspected of committing sexual harassment of two Australian women. In September 2003, three officers and soldiers from the US Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier robbed and seriously wounded a taxi driver in Kanagawa-Ken of Japan. The three officers and soldiers were sentenced to four years in prison. In October 2002, a female engineer in Baghdad of Iraq was handcuffed and made to stand in the scorching sun for one hour because she refused to be snuffed at by police dogs as she was taking a copy of Alcoran with her. The case sparked large-scale protest and demonstration in Iraq.

For a long time, the US State Department has been publishing "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices" every year. It presumes to be the "Judge of Human Rights in the World" and, regardless of the differences and disparities among different countries in politics, economy, history, culture and social development and strong opposition from other countries, denounces other countries unreasonably for their human rights status in compliance with its own ideology, value and human rights model. Meanwhile, it has turned a blind eye to its own human rights problems. This fully exposed the dual standards of the U.S. on human rights and its hegemonism. The human rights record of the U.S. is absolutely not in accord with its position as a world power, which constitutes a strong irony against its self-granted title of a big power in human rights. The United States should take its own human rights problems seriously, reflect on its erroneous position and behavior on human rights, and stop its unpopular interference with other countries' internal affairs under the pretext of promoting human rights.