

**The Report on Human Rights Violations in the United States in 2024**

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## Foreword

2024, as an election year in the United States, was a year of special concern that features aggravating political strife and social divide. Such a landscape offers an opportunity to review the state of human rights in the country in an intensive manner.

Economic and social inequalities in the United States worsened with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Inflation delivered a devastating blow to middle- and low-income families. Over 40 million Americans lived in poverty, and more than 700,000 people were homeless. Meanwhile, 13.5 percent of U.S. households faced food insecurity, and 13.8 million children lived in families that did not have enough food on the table. Drug overdose claimed over 100,000 lives, while the exorbitant and inefficient health care and insurance systems fueled widespread public outrage. The death toll from gun violence remained high. More than 1,400 children died of gunshots and over 1,300 people perished due to police brutality.

Vulnerable groups were trapped in dire straits with their rights being constantly violated. The American Indian boarding schools, which operated for over a century and a half, turned out to be hell with the discovery of the deaths of more than 3,100 native American children in them. Systemic racism was deeply entrenched in law enforcement and all aspects of social life. African Americans were three times more likely to be shot dead by police than whites and 61 percent of all children sentenced to life imprisonment without parole were of African descent. Nearly 40 percent of women experienced sexual harassment at some point in their careers, while domestic violence rates exceeded 40 percent in 11 states. Some 5 million women lived in areas with no obstetric services. The number of illegally employed children surged to its highest level in decades. Yet the authorities loosened regulation to allow the exploitation of child laborers. Deaths among migrants on the southern border continued to climb, with fatalities in the El Paso region of Texas skyrocketing from 72 in 2022 to 168 in 2024. Many immigration detention centers became secret sites of torture.

As for the numerous human rights issues in the United States, politicians from both parties equivocated during election campaigns and dodged the question of how to earnestly fix the problems. On social and livelihood issues, politicians beat around the bush, putting the interests of a privileged few above the well-being of the many. By exploiting racial and gender divides, they covered up structural problems in society by instigating antagonism between rival groups. They attacked each other over immigration and tried every way to capture attention and garner votes, with many of them demonizing immigrants. With dazzling political maneuvering, the rights of American people were reduced to mere tools for politicians to seize power.

U.S. domestic political strife had spillover effects, intensifying regional conflicts and leading to humanitarian disasters. The escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict resulted in over 100,000 casualties and displaced approximately 90 percent of Gaza's population. The unilateral sanctions imposed randomly by the United States adversely affected billions of people globally, with more than 60 percent of low-income countries bearing the brunt of these economic penalties. Despite 32

consecutive resolutions passed overwhelmingly by the UN General Assembly, the United States persisted in maintaining its economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. The torture apparatus at the Guantanamo Bay prison continued to operate, employing methods that were nothing short of appalling.

## **I. American Democracy: Carnival of Money Power Games**

The year 2024 was meant to be a defining moment for American citizens to exercise their political rights. Yet in reality the year was fraught with political violence as politics was controlled by money, justice was hijacked by politics, and voters were disenfranchised by electoral rules. As a result, the majority of Americans were profoundly disillusioned with American-style democracy.

Money controls U.S. politics. Money is the lifeblood of U.S. politics. And the electoral process is precisely where money comes in to exercise control. According to data of OpenSecrets, a research group tracking money in U.S. politics, over 15.9 billion U.S. dollars was spent during the 2024 federal election cycle, another record high.<sup>1</sup> Of the total campaign funds, more than 7.7 billion dollars came from super political action committees (PACs), while nearly 1.4 billion dollars came from more uncontrollable hybrid PACs. These committees are in a "gray area" that cannot be effectively regulated by current campaign laws in the United States, directly paving the way for money controlling politics.<sup>2</sup>

The manipulators behind big money politics are in fact financiers who seek to maximize their own interests. Those people willfully control the basic principles and actual operation of American politics through money. During the 2024 elections, at least 135 billionaires publicly endorsed presidential candidates from both major parties. Public data has revealed that the maximum amount of donations from a single donor received by presidential candidates of both parties during the campaign exceeded 100 million dollars, dwarfing previous "big numbers" of tens of millions of dollars.<sup>3</sup>

An opinion piece by columnist Belen Fernandez published on Al-Jazeera website on July 10, 2024, said, "In short, it is just another reminder of the inordinate power and influence wielded by America's donor class in a shameless plutocracy euphemized as 'democracy.'" "Plutocratic operations have become so normalized a part of the political landscape," she wrote. "At the end of the day, the United States is nothing but a government of the donors, by the donors, for the donors."<sup>4</sup>

Gerrymandering manipulates public will. The two major political parties in the United States blatantly put partisan interests above voter rights by meticulously crafting voter structures in their favor through extreme gerrymandering. Following the 2020 census, both parties pushed for radical redistricting for political gains, significantly impacting the outcomes of congressional elections.<sup>5</sup>

Gerrymandering driven by partisan interests has also led to judicial disputes. As of Sept. 30, 2024, a total of 84 lawsuits were filed around the country over gerrymandering. The majority of complaints demanded the revision of district maps initially drawn under the control of a single political party. Of the cases, 48 were related to accusations of racial discrimination.<sup>6</sup> In May 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 6-3 decision to nullify a lower court ruling that found South Carolina's re-drawing of congressional maps discriminated against Black voters. The Supreme Court decision in fact backed political action that suppressed voters. The three dissenting Supreme

Court justices warned the ruling had devastating implications. Justice Elena Kagan wrote: “In the electoral sphere especially, where ‘ugly patterns of pervasive racial discrimination’ have so long governed, we should demand better -- of ourselves, of our political representatives, and most of all, of this Court.”<sup>7</sup>

Election rules suppress voter rights. According to a report published on Dec. 1, 2024, by the Southern Poverty Law Center, 24 states have passed voter suppression laws, while 17 states have passed new or stricter voter ID laws since 2020.<sup>8</sup>

These laws imposed overly burdensome restrictions on voter identification and voting by mail, disproportionately affecting seniors, minorities, people with disabilities, low-income voters, and students.<sup>9</sup>

According to Vote Riders’ research, people of color in the United States were nearly four times more likely than white citizens to lack the required identification for voting. Many eligible voters, regardless of political affiliation, were unable to vote due to a lack of understanding of their state's voter identification laws.<sup>10</sup> A Brennan Center for Justice report published on Nov. 19, 2024 revealed that historically, Native Americans had the lowest voter turnout among all groups. Yet the U.S. government had consistently failed to improve their voting conditions, leading to widespread disenfranchisement.<sup>11</sup>

Extreme incidents of political violence occurred frequently. The prolonged partisan gridlock fueled a culture of political obstruction, often leading to political violence against individuals. Politicians from both parties continued to incite hatred and animosity, triggering radical behaviors. "Threats of violence become the new normal for politicians."<sup>12</sup>

As reported by Reuters on Oct. 21, 2024, since the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021, over 300 incidents of political violence had occurred in the United States. During the 2024 election, both the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates and their teams faced varying degrees of political violence. On July 13 and Sept. 15, 2024, Trump survived two assassination attempts. On Sept. 23, 2024, a shooting occurred at a Democratic campaign office in the state of Arizona.<sup>13</sup> Around Thanksgiving (Nov. 28, 2024), multiple Democratic members of Congress and Trump-nominated Cabinet and federal officials received bomb threats.<sup>14</sup>

The public was deeply disillusioned with American-style democracy. According to a New York Times & Siena College poll published on Oct. 28, 2024, nearly half of voters expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of the U.S. political system, with 62 percent believing the government primarily served the elite rather than ordinary citizens.<sup>15</sup>

Pew Research Center data showed that 41 percent of Americans believed the "American Dream" was no longer attainable, and 60 percent of young people aged 18 to 29 thought it was either unachievable or never existed.<sup>16</sup> In an article published on Nov. 6, 2024, Tyler Austin Harper, a scholar at Bates College, stated, "A political system like that is fundamentally broken," with both parties representing special interest groups and "often without even pretending to heed

the needs of voters." A vast majority of voters believed the United States was on the wrong track, and nearly 80 percent said the election had not made them proud of their country.<sup>17</sup>

## II. Social Welfare: Struggling Low-Incomers

Skyrocketing inflation exacerbated the wealth gap, delivering catastrophic blows to low- and middle-income families, while homelessness reached unprecedented levels. The costly and inefficient health care and insurance systems sparked widespread outrage. Substance abuse continued to harm public health. Gun violence threatened lives. Police brutality persisted in total disregard for human lives. Prisoners continued to be abused in detention facilities.

The wealth gap revealed "Two Americas." Income and wealth inequality in the United States far exceeded those of other developed nations and continued to worsen.<sup>18</sup> Data released by Statista on Sept. 16, 2024 showed that the U.S. poverty rate rose again in 2023, with 12.9 percent of the population living in poverty.<sup>19</sup> According to Federal Reserve data, as of June 30, 2024, the top 10 percent of U.S. households held 67 percent of the nation's total wealth, while the bottom 50 percent owned just 2.5 percent. The average wealth of the top 10 percent was 1,353 times higher than that of the bottom 50 percent. Educational inequality perpetuated intergenerational poverty, creating a vicious cycle. For example, the wealth of families where parents lacked a high school diploma was only 9 percent of that of families where parents had a four-year college degree.<sup>20</sup> The wealthiest 10 percent of households owned approximately 80 percent of the stock market value.<sup>21</sup> The United States had effectively split into "Two Americas" -- a small wealthy elite and a vast low- and middle-class majority.

Low-income families faced catastrophic impacts. In 2024, inflation remained high, so were consumer prices and interest rates, severely impacting ordinary Americans, many of whom saw higher debts than ever.<sup>22</sup> U.S. credit card debt totaled a record high of 1.14 trillion dollars in the second quarter of 2024.<sup>23</sup> Low-income families were forced to cut discretionary spending, and loan delinquency rates rose to the highest levels in nearly a decade.<sup>24</sup> In 2023, 13.5 percent of U.S. households faced food insecurity, up from 12.8 percent in 2022. Some 13.8 million children lived in households that did not have enough food on the table.<sup>25</sup>

Homelessness pushed people to the brink. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2024 annual report revealed that the number of homeless people in the United States reached 771,800, or approximately 23 per 10,000 people, marking an 18.1 percent increase from 2023 -- the largest rise since records began in 2007.<sup>26</sup> An increasing number of working Americans with decent jobs became homeless due to various factors.<sup>27</sup> Compounding the crisis, the Supreme Court ruled in July 2024 to allow fines, arrests, or imprisonment against homeless individuals sleeping outdoors.<sup>28</sup> California, home to nearly half of the nation's homeless population, ordered the dismantling of homeless encampments statewide.<sup>29</sup> In Los Angeles, a homeless individual was 79 times more likely than a housed person to be cited or arrested and 27 times more likely to be jailed than those with housing.<sup>30</sup>

Government-business collusion fueled substance abuse and drug crisis. Anne Milgram, administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, said the United States was facing "the most dangerous and deadly drug crisis."<sup>31</sup> Overdoses involving synthetic opioids (e.g.,

fentanyl) and stimulants (e.g., cocaine and methamphetamine) surged in the past few years. In 2023, there were 105,007 drug overdose deaths in the United States, with the highest mortality rate among adults aged 35 to 44.<sup>32</sup> Cannabis became a nationwide business, with retail sales exceeding 32 billion dollars in 2024.<sup>33</sup> According to the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, approximately 61.8 million Americans aged 12 and older used marijuana that year.

Nearly 9 million Americans misuse opioids, and "opioids have become the narcotic of the American public."<sup>34</sup> U.S. pharmaceutical giants, in pursuit of profit, deceptively promoted opioid use while employing every means to evade liability and compensation claims.<sup>35</sup> The American pharmaceutical lobby has also intensified policy influence, with annual spending exceeding 200 million U.S. dollars since 2007 and reaching a record high of nearly 400 million dollars in 2023.<sup>36</sup> The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) failed in its oversight duties when approving and labeling new painkillers.<sup>37</sup> The root of America's drug abuse and opioid crisis lies in interest hijacking, government-business collusion and regulatory failure.

Failed healthcare system triggers public anger. Excessive marketization and high monopolization have driven up medical prices, while special interest groups have hijacked policymaking. Bloated administrative costs across multiple systems have jointly led to spiraling healthcare expenditures in the United States. The nation's per capita health spending surged from 7,908 dollars in 2000 to 14,570 dollars in 2023. The Commonwealth Fund's September 2024 report, "Mirror, mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System," revealed that among 10 high-income nations, the United States spends the most on health care with expenditures continuing to rise, yet performs the worst. It is the only country without universal health coverage, and has the lowest life expectancy.

Due to exorbitant out-of-pocket costs and lack of primary care, among other things, 35 percent of American adults in 2023 either lacked adequate health coverage or had to forgo treatment due to insufficient insurance benefits, while another 9 percent had no health insurance at all. A significant number of people are unable to access Medicare due to unaffordable basic health care costs, which force them to endure untreated illnesses throughout their lives.<sup>38</sup> U.S. health insurers routinely employ tactics of "delay, deny and depose" against policyholders, driving numerous low- and middle-income patients into medical bankruptcy.<sup>39</sup> On Dec. 4, 2024, when UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was shot, ammunition found at the scene bore the words "delay", "deny" and "depose" -- terms that epitomize insurers' claim-avoidance strategies. The incident reignited public fury towards U.S. health insurance companies.<sup>40</sup>

Frequent mass shootings have plagued the nation. The U.S. government has failed to protect its people from the recurring violence caused by rampant gun misuse. The K-12 School Shooting Database website shows that school shootings and related casualties have risen sharply in recent years.<sup>41</sup> Data from the Gun Violence Archive show that in 2024 there were more than 40,000 gunshot deaths in the United States, 503 mass shootings, and 45 school shootings, 32 of which occurred in elementary and secondary schools. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Milwaukee County in the state of Wisconsin has between 10.8 and 14.6 homicide victims for every 100,000 children, with the vast majority of the victims dying from gunshots.<sup>42</sup> In March 2024, a

Pennsylvania survey found that nearly half of the parents were more worried about gun violence at school than about their children "being behind academically."<sup>43</sup>

Police brutality is rampant in law enforcement. The U.S. website Mapping Police Violence shows that police officers use violence against at least 300,000 individuals annually, with approximately 100,000 sustaining injuries. Fatal police encounters have shown a consistent upward trend since 2013. In 2024 alone, police shootings claimed 1,361 lives.<sup>44</sup> U.S. human rights activist Tamara Hill observed in an article: "Violence has become institutionalized within American law enforcement culture, while systemic impunity exacerbates police brutality. Under excessively lenient accountability standards, U.S. police departments and criminal justice systems routinely harm civilians without consequence."<sup>45</sup>

Inmates face abuse in U.S. prison facilities. Accounting for less than 5 percent of the global population, the United States incarcerates nearly 40 percent of the world's prisoners. As of 2024, approximately 1.9 million individuals had been detained across American correctional facilities, which means 1 in every 176 U.S. residents is currently imprisoned.<sup>46</sup> More alarmingly, at least one-quarter of released prisoners are rearrested within their first year of freedom.<sup>47</sup> The Los Angeles Times reported on Sept. 4, 2024 that dozens of women incarcerated in two prisons have filed multiple lawsuits against the corrections department, alleging that prison staff sexually harassed, molested, and raped them by exploiting their positions of authority. However, prison sexual abuse data showed that despite hundreds of complaints, virtually no disciplinary actions were taken against implicated staff.<sup>48</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice said Georgia prisons violated the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by placing inmates in "horrific, inhumane" conditions, the United Press International reported on Oct. 1, 2024, on its website.<sup>49</sup>

### **III. Racism: Shackles of Minorities**

The United Nations Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism noted that racism in the United States has been described as "being in the air we breathe" and persists "from cradle to grave."<sup>50</sup> Racist rhetoric runs rampant while the judicial system exhibits systemic racial discrimination at every level. Ethnic minorities are subjected to persistent and widespread discrimination and exclusion in their daily life and workplaces, with environmental racism emerging as a new concern. Furthermore, racial discrimination is being entrenched and disseminated in more covert forms through artificial intelligence.

Racist rhetoric has become pervasive. Inciting racial discrimination has become a key tactic in U.S. political campaigns. The National Broadcasting Company reported on Oct. 28, 2024 that speakers at a U.S. presidential campaign rally made a series of vulgar, racially charged remarks disparaging African Americans and Latinos.<sup>51</sup> As the 2024 presidential election concluded, many African Americans across the country received racist text messages instructing them to report to the nearest plantation to pick cotton. One disclosed message read, "Our Executive Slaves will send a brown van to pick you up. Be prepared to be searched upon entering the plantation."<sup>52</sup>

Systemic racial discrimination pervades law enforcement and judicial systems. A June 2024 report titled "Bias in the Criminal Legal System" jointly released by the American Bar Association and Stanford University, found that racial bias exists at every stage of criminal proceedings -- from arrest and bail to charging and sentencing. Compared with white individuals who committed similar offenses, African Americans and Latinos are more likely to be arrested by police, face longer pretrial detention, and receive harsher sentences.

Racial disparities are particularly stark in cases involving minor traffic, drug, and property offenses.<sup>53</sup> Racial discrimination is even more evident in instances of police use of force. Among documented cases of police force-related fatalities in the United States, African Americans are killed at three times the rate of white Americans, Native Americans at 2.2 times the rate, and Hispanic Americans 1.3 times.<sup>54</sup>

A report by the U.S. Department of Justice found that the Lexington Police Department in Mississippi "has created a system where officers can relentlessly violate the law." In this rural town, where approximately 76% of residents are African Americans, alarming patterns of racially discriminatory law enforcement and harassment were identified.<sup>55</sup> Another Justice Department investigation revealed that the Memphis Police Department in Tennessee engaged in excessive use of force and discriminatory treatment of African Americans, particularly affecting children. Between January 2018 and August 2023, 180 African American children were arrested for curfew violations or loitering, compared to just four White children. Similarly, 120 African American children were arrested for disorderly conduct, while only one White child faced the same charge.<sup>56</sup>

A report from the Brennan Center for Justice on December 10, 2024, highlighted racial disparities in federal sentencing, particularly in the application of the death penalty. In Texas, African Americans were found to be 16 times more likely than individuals of other racial groups to receive a death sentence in federal trials.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, a report by Detroit News on February 4, 2024, revealed that while African Americans constitute approximately 13% of the U.S. population, they account for 61% of all juveniles sentenced to life without parole.<sup>58</sup>

Environmental racism has far-reaching consequences. A report released by United Nations human rights experts on May 16, 2024, highlighted that in the United States, "the devastating effects of the climate and ecological crises are disproportionately borne by those who face conditions of systemic inequality and racism."<sup>59</sup> Organizations such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Lung Association have identified significant disparities in environmental pollution exposure across racial groups, which serve as a fundamental driver of health inequities.

Due to historical factors such as racial segregation and redlining, African Americans are more likely to be exposed to hazardous or polluted environment.<sup>60</sup> A report by the Kaiser Family Foundation on October 24, 2024, noted that nearly 80% of urban solid waste incinerators in the U.S. are located in African American, Hispanic, and low-income communities, contributing to elevated risks of cancer and other severe illnesses.<sup>61</sup>

A study published in the *Environmental Research* journal in March 2024, co-authored by scholars from Tulane University, the University of Memphis, and Louisiana State University, examined Louisiana's Cancer Alley, a region densely populated with chemical plants and predominantly home to African American residents. The study found that local cancer risk from industrial air pollution is the highest in the nation - more than seven times the national average. Additionally, the health risks posed by air pollution to pregnant women and newborns in the area are three times higher than the national average.<sup>62</sup>

A survey by Gallup further revealed that environmental pollution has displaced a significant number of African Americans. Between May 2023 and April 2024 alone, approximately four million African Americans were forced to relocate temporarily due to pollution, while another two million had to move permanently.<sup>63</sup>

African Americans face a severe health deficit. A report released by the Kaiser Family Foundation on February 22, 2024, underscores that the persistent health and medical disparities affecting African American communities are deeply rooted in historical racial discrimination. African Americans have a life expectancy nearly five years shorter than that of white Americans, an infant mortality rate more than twice as high, and a maternal mortality rate nearly three times greater.<sup>64</sup> Over the past two decades, the United States has made little progress in closing racial gaps in key health indicators. Federal, state and local governments have established systems that maintain the status quo, while powerful commercial and political interests continue to obstruct efforts to improve the well-being of African Americans.<sup>65</sup>

A report published by the American Association for Cancer Research in June 2024 highlights stark racial disparities in cancer outcomes. Although African American women have a 6% lower incidence rate of breast cancer compared to White women, they are 40% more likely to die from the disease.<sup>66</sup>

The Kaiser Family Foundation further reported on October 24, 2024, that South Carolina ranks among the states with the poorest health outcomes, with severe shortages of healthcare facilities and medical personnel and a high prevalence of chronic illnesses. African Americans in particular face significant barriers to healthcare access, with many lacking health insurance and struggling to obtain quality medical services.

Jameta Nicole Barlow, a community health psychologist and professor at George Washington University, said that government actions essentially send a clear message to African Americans: "Who are you to ask for health care?"<sup>67</sup>

Boarding schools became a living hell for Indigenous children. Since the passage of the Civilization Fund Act in 1819, the U.S. government has enacted a series of laws and policies to establish Native American boarding schools nationwide. These institutions forcibly enrolled indigenous children with the explicit aim of erasing their cultural identity and severing their ties to their heritage. The boarding school system led to widespread suffering and tragedy.<sup>68</sup>

A report released by the U.S. government in July 2024 acknowledges that from the early 19th century to the 1970s, many Native American students in these schools endured physical and sexual abuse, with at least 973 documented student deaths.<sup>69</sup> However, an independent year-long investigation by The Washington Post uncovered a much higher toll, revealing that between 1828 and 1970, a total of 3,104 students died in these institutions—three times the number reported by the government.

Judi Gaiashkibos, executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, condemned the boarding school system, stating that these were not schools at all, but rather "prison camps" and "work camps."<sup>70</sup>

Rights of Native Americans have been trampled upon. According to an Associated Press report on April 14, 2024, Native Americans are twice as likely as other racial groups to experience violent crimes, including rape and sexual assault.<sup>71</sup> The University of Southern California Center for Health Journalism reported on January 18, 2024, that Indigenous communities face severe barriers to accessing healthcare. In Montana, for example, the average life expectancy for Native Americans is 17 years shorter than that of White residents.<sup>72</sup>

A Los Angeles Times report from June 17, 2024, highlighted that Native Americans have the highest mortality rates and the lowest life expectancy of any racial group in the United States—disparities that are not attributable to genetic factors.<sup>73</sup> Economic discrimination is also evident. According to an article published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis on March 8, 2024, Native American borrowers face higher interest rates when purchasing homes, with loan rates on reservations averaging 1.43 percentage points higher than those for White borrowers.<sup>74</sup>

Native Americans face low voter participation rates. According to a research published by the Native American Rights Fund on August 13, 2024, approximately one in four eligible Native Americans is not registered to vote, and their voter turnout is 16 percentage points lower than that of White voters. This disparity is rooted in a long history of systemic exclusion from the U.S. electoral process.<sup>75</sup>

Asian Americans continue to face systemic discrimination in various aspects. A report released by the Alliance for Justice on May 22, 2024, highlighted that for much of the 19th and 20th centuries, Asian Americans were systematically excluded from many areas of public life. Even today, 41 state supreme courts have never had an Asian American judge, despite some of these states having significant Asian American populations.

The report argues that this glaring absence of representation highlights systemic issues that continue to exclude AAPI from key positions in the judiciary, perpetuating a history of disparity and inequity.<sup>76</sup> According to a report by the Harvard Business Review, although Asians are the most educated segment of the American workforce, they are the least likely among all racial groups to ascend to leadership roles. However, a detailed analysis of top Fortune 500 technology companies shows that Asian professionals are even less likely to progress in their careers today than they were a decade ago. Although Asians make up around 13 percent of the U.S. professional workforce, they hold only 1.5 percent of Fortune 500 corporate officer roles. Additionally, more than half of Fortune 1000 company Boards have no Asian directors.<sup>77</sup>

The unwarranted exclusion of Chinese Americans leads to tragedy. The China Initiative implemented by the U.S. government from 2018 to 2022 brought serious troubles to Chinese-American scientists, even causing unbearable loss of lives. After a lengthy investigation by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), Jane Wu, a Chinese-American neuroscientist at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, was barred from applying for further research grants. The investigation destroyed her career. On July 10, 2024, she took her own life in her Chicago home.<sup>78</sup> Monica M. Bertagnoli, director of the NIH, issued a statement acknowledging that U.S. government actions "have had the unintended consequence of creating a difficult climate for our valued Asian American, Asian immigrant and Asian research colleagues who may feel targeted and alienated."<sup>79</sup> According to the "2024 State of Chinese Americans" study conducted by the Committee of 100 and National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (NORC), about two thirds of Chinese Americans (68 percent) face at least one form of discrimination in an average month, and 50 percent report having felt hopeless in the 30 days before taking the survey.<sup>80</sup>

Racial discrimination has evolved and intensified. In a report titled "Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance," Ashwini K.P., a UN human rights expert, pointed out that a special study of the U.S. law enforcement image database showed that the proportion of people of African descent in the database was disproportionately high, leading to African American individuals being more likely to be mistakenly identified as suspects in facial recognition systems used by U.S. law enforcement. This reflects systemic racial discrimination with deep historical roots.<sup>81</sup>

#### **IV. Vulnerable Groups: Helplessness of Women and Children**

The United States has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and is the only UN member state that has refused to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A constitutional amendment to "equal rights" for men and women, proposed more than 100 years ago, has yet to be passed. The absence of legal protection has led to widespread infringement of women's and children's rights.

Gender discrimination in the workplace has expanded significantly. It's hard for women to break through the professional glass ceiling. According to a report from S&P Global Market Intelligence, in 2023, women held just 11.8 percent of the roughly 15,000 C-suite roles in listed American companies, down from 12.2 percent the year before.<sup>82</sup> In 2023, the gender wage gap between men and women working full-time widened year-over-year, according to an annual report from the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau calculates the gender wage gap by comparing only men and women who work year-round in full-time jobs. But a grimmer picture for women emerges from data that includes part-time workers.<sup>83</sup> Occupational gender segregation is a major cause of the gender wage gap.<sup>84</sup> In 2023, 12 percent of women in professional and related occupations were employed in the relatively high-paying computer and mathematical and architecture and engineering occupations, compared with 50 percent of men.<sup>85</sup> Even within the same occupations, women earn less on average than men. On average, women with graduate degrees earn less than men with bachelor's degrees.<sup>86</sup>

The persistent scourge of sexual violence across multiple sectors remains difficult to eradicate. Sexual harassment remains commonplace in American businesses, with about 40 percent of working women experiencing such treatment during their careers. Even when reported, it is rarely handled effectively.<sup>87</sup> The rate of sexual harassment experienced by intern doctors is alarmingly high. More than half of all new doctors are subjected to sexual harassment during their first year on the job, researchers say.<sup>88</sup> The FBI has agreed to pay more than 22 million U.S. dollars to settle a class-action sexual harassment lawsuit by newly hired women. The lawyer for the case David J. Shaffer pointed out that these problems are pervasive within the FBI.<sup>89</sup> According to the Costs of War project at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the number of sexual assaults in the U.S. military in 2023 was 73,695, more than double the official figure. On average, nearly one-quarter of active-duty women experienced sexual assault during the years of the Afghanistan war from 2001 to 2021.<sup>90</sup> Some individuals accused of sexual misconduct have been nominated to positions within the U.S. government. Gender research experts pointed out that this move made most women facing sexual harassment or assault no longer believe that the judicial system would punish sexual offenders.<sup>91</sup>

Domestic violence is on the rise. An average of 24 people every minute become victims of domestic violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the United States. That figure comes from the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Of the nearly 27,000 domestic batteries, 75 percent involved female victims. Of those women, 65 percent were Black.<sup>92</sup> According to the World Population Review, 11 states in the United States have a domestic violence rate of more than 40

percent in 2024.<sup>93</sup> However, these figures only represent part of the overall scope of domestic violence in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, victims of 53 percent of intimate partner violence and 52 percent of domestic violence do not report their cases to the police. The department estimates that the actual number of victims of intimate partner violence in 2023 reached about 630,000, while there are more than 1.165 million victims of domestic violence.<sup>94</sup>

Women's right to health has been neglected amid political battles. In states where abortion is banned, access to overall healthcare is restricted, and many obstetricians are leaving their jobs, resulting in the emergence of new "obstetric care deserts."<sup>95</sup>

David Radley, a senior scientist for the Commonwealth Fund's Tracking Health System Performance initiative, estimated that over 5 million women live in a county that's considered a maternity care desert.<sup>96</sup> The political battles over abortion have led to constant policy reversals, leaving the public in a state of panic, unable to anticipate their own rights. The 2024 Kaiser Family Foundation Women's Health Survey reported that 63 percent reproductive age women in the United States are concerned that they or someone close to them would not be able to get an abortion if it was needed to preserve their life or health.<sup>97</sup> There are emerging patterns in multiple states of hospitals delaying or denying standard reproductive care<sup>98</sup>, and of women unwilling to risk going to those hospitals, for fear of legal trouble, including possible criminal charges.<sup>99</sup> According to a report by USA Today in September 2024, a woman in Georgia died after failing to get the care she needed because of abortion bans. Another woman in the state, fearing the potential penalties of the current abortion laws, also died as a result of delayed medical care.<sup>100</sup> "We are in a fearful climate with increased hostility and legal risk for patients, providers and helpers," said Kelly Baden, vice president for public policy at the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports access to abortion.<sup>101</sup>

The protection of children's right to life and health is inadequate. Every year, the United States recorded more than 5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, far exceeding the rates in other high-income countries.<sup>102</sup> A study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics in March 2024 found that nearly 130,000 Chicago children under the age of six are exposed to poisonous lead in their household drinking water because of lead pipes. In addition, there are racial disparities in both testing rates and exposure levels, with Black and Latino residents more likely to have lead-contaminated water due to lead pipes.<sup>103</sup>

The law enforcement and judicial systems have become complicit in the sexual abuse of children. A Washington Post investigation has found that at least 1,800 state and local law enforcement officers were charged with crimes involving child sexual abuse from 2005 through 2022. Law enforcement agencies across the country have done little to root out child sex offenders within their ranks. The entire justice system is an accomplice to perpetrators: ineffective background checks allow those convicted of sexual assault to enter the police system; accused cops have used their knowledge of the legal system to stall cases, get charges lowered or evade convictions; prosecutors have given generous plea deals to officers who admitted to raping and groping minors; judges have allowed many convicted officers to avoid prison time. Even Assistant U.S. Attorney General Kristen Clarke admitted that members of law enforcement who have

exploited their positions of power have left child victims with “no recourse and no one else to protect them.”<sup>104</sup>

The persecution of young girls is shocking. In the United States, no federal legislation has been passed against flagrant violation of international standards banning child marriage, and child marriage remains “legal” in the vast majority of states. Eighty-six percent of child marriages reported in the United States were between adults and minors, most commonly girls aged 16 to 17, but sometimes as young as 12. In addition to physical and emotional abuse, it puts minors at higher risk of poverty and exploitation and denies them educational and economic opportunities.<sup>105</sup> The harmful practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) remains widespread in the United States. At least 513,000 women and girls are living with or at risk of FGM, and nine U.S. states and the District of Columbia have no law banning FGM. Of those that do have laws banning it, many do not prohibit girls from being taken out of state to be cut.<sup>106</sup>

## V. Fatal Journey: Elegy of Undocumented Immigrants

The humanitarian crisis at the border continues to worsen, with migrants suffering torture and inhumane treatment, and large numbers of migrant children falling victim to exploitation and enslavement. Immigration policies are deeply intertwined with political elections, with politicians openly inciting hatred against immigrants, who have become scapegoats for political parties to shift social tensions. In the process, various human rights are ruthlessly trampled.

Politicians openly incite hatred against immigrants. False and misleading information about immigrants is widely disseminated.<sup>107</sup> A report by the Guardian on Sept. 18, 2024 said that racist conspiracy theories about immigrants have dominated the 2024 U.S. election cycle. High-ranking Republicans have doubled down on unsubstantiated rumors about Black and brown migrants. Experts argued that the spread of such disinformation amplifies existing xenophobic beliefs within the American psyche as a means of political gain.<sup>108</sup> A report from CNN on Oct. 7, 2024 said that during election campaigns, politicians used disparaging rhetoric against undocumented immigrants, accusing those who commit murder of having “bad genes.”<sup>109</sup>

One-fifth of the residents in Aurora, Colorado, were foreign-born. During election campaigns, politicians unleashed a world of panic and pain through their threats of mass deportations and family separations against any immigrant -- legal or undocumented -- who they decide doesn't belong in their America.<sup>110</sup>

Politicians have stoked and inflamed anti-immigrant sentiment in the American society. ABC News reported on Dec. 7, 2024 that in New York City, three adults asked two immigrant teenagers if they spoke English; when the teens said they did not, they were attacked, with one dead and one injured.<sup>111</sup>

The humanitarian crisis on the southern border continues. A report in Newsweek on Nov. 25, 2024 stated that, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data, the rate at which immigrants die on the border has surged. In the El Paso area of Texas alone, the number of deaths rose from 72 in 2022 to 168 in 2024. The proportion of women and children among the migrant deaths is staggering, with more than 500 women having died there since 2021. Among the migrant children who died, the youngest was only 1 year old. As most deaths occur in remote areas, many remain under-reported.<sup>112</sup>

Immigrants face torture and inhumane treatment. The United States operates the world's largest immigration detention regime. These facilities not only profit massively, but also shield and tolerate staff members who torture and abuse immigrants. A report released on Feb. 6, 2024 by the Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program at Harvard Law School, revealed that solitary confinement is widely used. There were more than 14,000 placements in solitary confinement between 2018 and 2023, and these placements lasted 27 days on average. Almost 30 percent of solitary confinement placements lasted over 90 days and 25 percent of placements lasted over 365 days, causing mental health conditions for those placed in solitary confinement.<sup>113</sup> A report

released by a coalition of legal and human rights organizations has revealed that the Louisiana Federal Immigration Detention Center, where thousands of immigrants are being held, distributes filthy drinking water and food contaminated with rat droppings. Some of the detainees were transported to the detention centers from the border shackled in five-point restraints for hours, unable to use the restroom or eat and drink, and were left with deep cuts on their wrists and legs. Numerous detainees told of being denied medical care. “We see these jails almost as ‘black sites’ in the national immigration system,” said Sarah Decker, one of the report’s lead authors and an attorney with the advocacy group Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights.<sup>114</sup> A report published by the Guardian on Nov. 20, 2024 highlighted that a detention center in Baker County, Florida, has been accused of systemic abuse and discrimination. The center, operated by the Baker County sheriff’s office under contract with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, allows its staff to routinely racially and sexually harass detainees, deny medical care and sanitary products to women, and then falsify records to cover their tracks.<sup>115</sup>

Migrant children are subjected to abuse in shelters. According to a July 18, 2024 report from The Washington Post, incidents of sexual abuse against children in U.S. immigration shelters have been frequent in recent years. The report stated that a supervisor at a shelter in Channelview, Texas, repeatedly raped, abused and threatened a teenage girl. A youth care worker at an El Paso shelter sexually abused three girls aged from five to 11 multiple times and threatened to kill their families to silence them. The actual operators of these shelters received over 100 reports of children being sexually harassed or abused but took no action, failing to investigate or hold anyone accountable, thereby allowing these situations to persist.<sup>116</sup>

Hundreds of thousands of migrant children are unaccounted for. After arriving in the United States, migrant children are forcibly separated from their families and detained. Many go missing after being set free, facing exploitation, abuse, forced labor and even life-threatening dangers. According to a Nov. 27, 2024 report of BBC News, due to the government releasing unaccompanied migrant children to unvetted sponsors in the United States, over 320,000 unaccompanied minors were lost track of from October 2018 to September 2023.<sup>117</sup> Many of them have been lured into forced labour and sex trafficking, facing abuse, exploitation and human trafficking.<sup>118</sup>

The number of illegally employed child migrants has soared. According to a report released in November, 2024 by U.S. Senate, there was a disturbing rise in illegal child labor among migrant children, leading to levels of illegal child labor not seen since the early 20th century.<sup>119</sup> Data from the Department of Labor show that the number of minors involved in documented child labor violations (not including the ones that are never reported) increased 472 percent between 2015 and 2023.<sup>120</sup> A significant number of them are migrant children. In fiscal year 2024, the Labor Department found 4,030 children employed in violation of child labor laws across all industries. Of the 736 cases brought by the department, nearly half involved minors employed in violation of hazardous occupation laws. ABC news reported on Dec. 7, 2024 that migrant children in the United States are not only employed in agriculture and food supply jobs, but also in dangerous jobs including construction and roofing.<sup>121</sup> However, in face of the surge in child labor, lawmakers have responded by weakening child labor laws and relaxed restrictions to legalize illegal act, opening the door to child exploitation.<sup>122</sup> According to data from think tank Economic

Policy Institute, at least 30 states have introduced or passed bills to weaken child labor protections since 2021, and in nine of those states, legislation has been introduced to expand youth employment in hazardous occupations or workplaces. In 2024, 11 states have introduced or taken new action on bills to roll back child labor protections.<sup>123</sup> The Washington Post reported that Indiana's new law extends legal work hours for 14- and 15-year-olds, repealing all work-hour restrictions for 16- and 17-year-olds. Florida has made law changes to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to work seven days in a row and also removed all hour restrictions for teens in online school or home school, effectively permitting them to work overnight shifts. An Iowa law allows minors in that state to work in jobs previously deemed too hazardous.<sup>124</sup> These laws not only fail to protect children's rights but have instead become tools for "child exploitation." "It is immoral and inappropriate and utterly the wrong decision to roll back child labor law," said Terri Gerstein, director of a labor initiative at New York University. "All that weakening and rolling back child labor laws is going to do is create more kids whose fingers and hands, legs are amputated who are killed on the job."<sup>125</sup>

## **VI. American Hegemony: Terminator of Other Countries' Human Rights**

The United States has long pursued hegemony and unilateralism, believing that only it alone can always sit at the table to enjoy the feast, while others can only be at the mercy of its decisions; only it can always drink the milk, while others are destined to remain the 'cows' that provide it. With its power politics, Washington has repeatedly trampled on international law and the fundamental norms of global relations, violated human rights in other nations with impunity, and posed a grave threat to global peace, security and development.

The United States has been serving as an accomplice to the genocide in Gaza. Since the outbreak of the latest round of the Israel-Palestine conflict in October 2023, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has worsened dramatically. According to statistics published on Dec. 31, 2024 by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the conflict has resulted in nearly 46,000 Palestinian deaths in Gaza, over 108,000 injuries and the displacement of 90 percent of the population in Gaza.<sup>126</sup> Since the outbreak of the conflict, the U.S. government has provided unwavering military and diplomatic support to Israel, repeatedly thwarting international efforts to secure a ceasefire. It has exercised its veto power seven times to block United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Washington's stance has sparked widespread controversy and discontent across the country. Student protests have erupted on dozens of college campuses, only to be met with forceful responses from both university administrations and law enforcement. On Feb. 25, 2024, a member of the U.S. Air Force set himself on fire in front of the Israeli embassy in Washington to protest against the U.S. administration's support for Israel.<sup>127</sup> On Feb. 23, 2024, a group of United Nations human rights experts issued a joint statement, which emphasizes that the International Court of Justice's ruling on Jan. 26, 2024 that there is a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza, underscoring the imperative of an arms embargo on Israel. The experts urged countries to halt arms transfers and military aid to Israel, while the United States remains the largest arms exporters.<sup>128</sup> A report published on Aug. 25, 2024 by the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft stated that a significant portion of U.S.-supplied weaponry has been used in the Israel-Palestine conflict.<sup>129</sup> Another joint statement issued by 32 UN human rights experts pointed out, "The transfer of weapons and ammunition to Israel may constitute serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian laws and risk State complicity in international crimes, possibly including genocide."<sup>130</sup>

The excessive use of unilateral sanctions is fueling humanitarian crises. The United States is overwhelmingly the world's biggest user of unilateral sanctions. It has increasingly imposed them in recent years, negatively affecting the lives of billions across the globe.<sup>131</sup> The Washington Post website reported on July 25, 2024 that the United States had been imposing sanctions at a record-setting pace. As of April 19, 2024, the U.S. government had 15,373 active sanctions in place -- far exceeding other countries, with more than 60 percent of all low-income countries now under some form of financial penalty.<sup>132</sup> The U.S. news website Common Dreams reported on Aug. 12, 2024 that hundreds of legal experts and groups worldwide have jointly stated that the broad use of unilateral sanctions constitutes collective punishment that harms civilian population

and violates international law. Overwhelming evidence shows that broad economic sanctions can spark and prolong economic crises, hinder access to essential goods like food, fuel and medicine, and increase poverty, hunger, disease and even death rates, especially among children.<sup>133</sup> The sanctions and inhumane blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States for more than six decades serve as a stark example of its system of unilateral coercive measures.<sup>134</sup> The website of the French monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique* published an article on Oct. 7, 2024, stating that U.S. sanctions have left Cuba trapped in days and nights marked by poverty, indignity, darkness and exhaustion.<sup>135</sup> On Oct. 30, 2024, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution reiterating its call on the United States to end economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba with an overwhelming favor.<sup>136</sup>

On Feb. 8, 2024, several UN human rights experts issued a joint statement criticizing the U.S. unilateral designation of certain states as Sponsors of Terrorism (SST). They argued that such measures negatively affect the "fundamental human rights, including the right to food, right to health, right to education, economic and social rights, right to life and right to development."<sup>137</sup>

Overseas U.S. Military Presence Harms Local Communities. According to a report by *Okinawa Times* on Dec. 24, 2024, since the U.S. military's arrival on the islands in 1945, at least 371 cases of sexual violence have been committed by American military personnel, resulting in persistent violations of local residents' dignity and lives.<sup>138</sup>

On July 11, 2024, *The Asahi Shimbun* reported that the Okinawa prefectural assembly "unanimously adopted a resolution and a statement of protest against the U.S. military and the central government over a series of sex crime cases involving U.S. servicemen stationed here." The assembly also demanded measures to prevent recurrence and called for revisions to the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement.<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, *The Korea Times* reported on Oct. 8, 2024 that "the number of crimes committed by U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) personnel has increased steadily over the past five years," sparking widespread public protests.<sup>140</sup>

Additionally, *The Asahi Shimbun* reported on Feb. 7, 2024 that the Okinawa prefectural government has repeatedly urged U.S. military bases to investigate water pollution linked to carcinogenic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances detected near military installations. However, the U.S. military has consistently ignored these requests.<sup>141</sup>

The Ongoing Torture Regime at Guantanamo Prison. According to a report by *The New York Times* on Dec. 18, 2024, detainees at Guantanamo have been imprisoned for approximately 20 years.<sup>142</sup> The prison's torture system persists to this day,<sup>143</sup> with inmates routinely subjected to inhumane abuse.

One detainee, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, endured various forms of torture, including waterboarding, mock executions, rectal force-feeding and sleep deprivation. He was suspended naked in a basement, confined to a cramped and sealed space where he could only touch the

ground on tiptoes, forced into contorted positions until his limbs dislocated, and deprived of sleep for over 10 consecutive days.<sup>144</sup>

The Center for Victims of Torture reported on May 15, 2024 that interrogators at Guantanamo employed brutal methods causing "physical and psychological trauma" from which "survivors will never fully recover."<sup>145</sup>

On Sept. 11, 2024, UN human rights experts issued a statement highlighting unresolved issues stemming from U.S. practices, including illegal renditions, torture, inhumane detention conditions, unfair trials by irregular military commissions, arbitrary detention and other violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law. These practices have undermined justice for victims of terrorism, perpetuating impunity and denying redress.<sup>146</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The tumultuous political stage of the United States in 2024 acts as a prism, reflecting the structural dilemmas of American-style human rights. Under the collusion of power and capital, human rights have been distorted into mere props in a political "show" and bargaining chips in a power "casino," completely deviating from the core values and fundamental principles of human rights. How to effectively address the genuine needs of the American people and translate respect for and protection of human rights into tangible actions remains an inescapable challenge for the U.S. government.

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