



International Human Rights Day 2015

Press Statement

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Secretary of State

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was forged in the aftermath of World War II to protect freedom and prevent future atrocities. As we commemorate it today, we recall President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1941 Four Freedoms address, which inspired the Universal Declaration, and which the United Nations selected as this year’s theme for International Human Rights Day.

The “four freedoms” – of speech and religion, from want and fear – are as relevant and compelling today as they were when Roosevelt spoke almost three quarters of a century ago.

These freedoms and the Universal Declaration in which they are now enshrined serve as a beacon for Tunisians as they continue their brave transition from dictatorship to democracy; for Burmese who fought tirelessly to bring about this year’s historic election; for former member of parliament and human rights activist Murod Juraev of Uzbekistan released at long last; for prisoners of conscience who still long for their freedom, such as Liu Xiaobo of China, Bassel Khartabil of Syria, Leopoldo Lopez of Venezuela; and journalists, artists, religious minority leaders, and women’s rights activists detained unjustly in Iran.

On this day – and every day – we call on the government of Burundi to stem the alarming levels of violence threatening that country’s stability; on the governments of China, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela, among others, to stop stifling free and open media; and on the regime in North Korea to immediately shut down the camps where tens of thousands of political prisoners are starving, suffering, and working without pay.

We decry the ongoing repression and brutality of the Assad regime in Syria and we stand resolute in our fight against the terrorism perpetrated by Daesh, Boko Haram, al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab and other groups who have zero regard for human rights, or for human life.

Today, we recommit to the truth that human beings of every faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation and background are endowed with “equal and inalienable rights.”

The vigilant, unwavering advancement of those rights will make the world safer and more prosperous for us all.