

**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS (GA)
ON THE REINTRODUCTION OF RECOMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN AND CIVIL
RIGHTS RESOLUTION**

MAY 7, 2009

Madam Speaker, I rise to reintroduce my resolution urging the United States to ratify and implement certain fundamental international conventions.

This resolution is supported by a variety of organizations including Free the Slaves, Human Rights Watch, AFL-CIO, Amnesty International USA, Global Rights, Citizens for Global Solutions, Oxfam America, the National Alliance of HUD Tenants, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, and the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Justice and Human Rights.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Universal Rights. It is the foundation of the current human rights movement. Americans, led by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, helped craft this historic convention, and next week, the United States will again seek a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Last week, I joined my colleagues to protest the genocide in Darfur at the Sudanese Embassy in Washington, D.C. Three years ago, many of us were arrested doing the same thing; three years later, millions continue to suffer.

Our case against this and other humanitarian crises would be so much stronger if the United States had ratified the U.N. Conventions that address the rights of women, children, and forced disappearance. How can we ask for our global trading partners to respect international labor standards, when we ourselves have not ratified ILO standards on the right to organize and bargain collectively, or against forced child labor, or age discrimination? How can we fight poverty and homelessness if we do not support UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights? How can we stand up for civil rights when we do not support hemispheric efforts to recognize historic struggles of marginalized communities?

Our country was founded on the principles of civil and human rights. Many, many people--men, women, and even children--have sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we enjoy today. Madam Speaker, this is a time of war. This is a time when the global economy is struggling. This is a time when access to food, water, shelter, and resources impacts every person on this planet. It is during periods like these when it is most important to protect our values and our commitment to universal human and civil rights.

Simply said, this resolution is our recommitment to our own American principles and to our neighbors and friends around the world. We must always be vigilant. We must be vocal. But we must remember -- actions speak louder than words.