

# THE U.S. RECOMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS RESOLUTION

On May 7, 2009, Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) reintroduced H. Res. 416, formerly H. Res. 1169 in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. This resolution calls on the United States to ratify and implement fundamental international conventions.

## PURPOSE

This legislation urges the Senate to fight discrimination, xenophobia, slavery, torture, racism, human and civil rights abuses in domestic and foreign policy by ratifying key human and civil rights conventions.

## BACKGROUND

The United States played an historic key role in building a global society. The headquarters of the United Nations is located in New York City; the headquarters of the Organization of the United States is in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Bill of Rights was referenced for the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human rights. Even the name of the United Nations was brainstormed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1942.

Unfortunately, there seven key United Nations conventions and six International Labor Organization conventions that the United States has not ratified. These are agreements that the majority of the rest of the world have already adopted. Many of these standards are the cornerstones of our own domestic law.

## WHY MAY

May 1<sup>st</sup> is the anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. On this historic day, it is important to reiterate our commitment to combat slavery, torture, racism, discrimination, and xenophobia in all forms.

The Slave Act which abolished the slave trade in the British Empire was the first step of a long effort to expand human and civil rights in the New World. This launched a nearly century-long process to abolish slavery in the Americas. It took another 25 years in the British Colonies, another 58 years in the United States, and another 80 years in Brazil, the last country in the hemisphere, to end slavery. The fight continues to this day to heal the scars in our hemisphere and expand basic human rights to all people.

## WHO SUPPORTS THIS EFFORT?

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