

2024

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT USA

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Executive Summary

Key human rights issues in the United States during 2024 have been marked by significant challenges and some areas of progress. The landscape of human rights in the country has been shaped by systemic racism, economic inequality, and legislative actions that have raised concerns among various civil society organizations and international bodies. Police violence continues to disproportionately impact Black communities, with Black individuals being nearly 2.9 times more likely to be killed by police compared to white individuals. Over 1,150 people were killed by police in 2023 alone, and systemic racism remains pervasive, especially in the context of law enforcement and gun violence. Marginalized racial and ethnic groups continue to experience significant barriers to justice, leading to widespread calls for police reform and accountability.

The issue of reproductive rights has also emerged as a severe human rights concern. Several states have passed restrictive abortion laws, including complete bans, significantly limiting access to reproductive healthcare. This regression in reproductive rights highlights a broader trend of diminishing women's autonomy and access to essential services. Meanwhile, discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals has intensified, particularly through state-level anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, which includes restrictions on healthcare access for transgender individuals. These actions have contributed to a rise in violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ communities, prompting urgent calls for legal protections and societal change. Additionally, U.S. asylum and immigration policies have continued to violate international human rights standards, with the government implementing measures that severely limit asylum seekers' ability to seek protection. These policies have resulted in dangerous and precarious situations for many migrants, especially those fleeing violence or persecution.

Despite these challenges, there have been some notable areas of progress. The Biden administration has taken steps to promote racial equity, including policies aimed at addressing social justice and climate change issues. Furthermore, the U.S. State Department has actively worked to hold individuals globally accountable for human rights violations, signaling a commitment to international human rights efforts. The U.S. Supreme Court also reinforced voting rights protections, ensuring greater democratic participation in elections. However, several issues remain concerning. Economic inequality has deepened, with the national poverty rate rising, especially after the end of pandemic-related support programs. The widening racial wealth gap continues to disproportionately affect marginalized communities, further entrenching economic disparities. Gun violence remains a persistent problem, with continued inaction on comprehensive gun control measures leading to disproportionate harm in many communities. Indigenous communities also continue to face challenges in asserting their rights, with land use and cultural preservation issues remaining largely unresolved.

To address these ongoing human rights issues, there are several key recommendations for action. The U.S. government must prioritize comprehensive police reform, improve access to reproductive healthcare, and enhance legal protections for marginalized communities against discrimination. International bodies such as the United Nations should continue to monitor U.S. human rights practices and hold the country accountable for violations of

international laws. Civil society organizations must also play a crucial role by mobilizing public support for human rights reforms, educating communities about their rights, and pushing for legislative change at both the state and federal levels. The complex intersection of these issues highlights the urgent need for reform and continued global scrutiny to ensure that human rights are fully protected in the United States.

Methodology

The methodology for collecting data for human rights reports on the USA follows a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach, aimed at ensuring accuracy, reliability, and ethical reporting. This process involves various sources of information and data collection methods, along with addressing several challenges encountered during the research process.

Sources of Information

1. **Interviews:** Researchers conduct interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including victims of human rights violations, local activists, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These interviews are vital for gathering firsthand accounts and understanding the broader context of the violations[1][4].
2. **Field Research:** Field visits are an essential component, especially when rights violations are reported in specific areas such as refugee camps or hospitals. Local partners assist in identifying key locations and facilitating access to interviewees[1].
3. **Document Review:** Researchers undertake extensive literature reviews, analyzing existing reports from NGOs, governmental documents, academic studies, and media sources. This helps corroborate information gathered from interviews and provides a broader perspective on the issues at hand[1][3].
4. **Statistical Data:** Quantitative data from government reports and international bodies like the United Nations is also utilized. This data helps to highlight patterns of abuse or discrimination affecting specific populations[5].

Data Collection Methods

- **Qualitative Interviews:** One-on-one interviews are conducted in private settings to ensure confidentiality and encourage open, honest dialogue. These interviews typically focus on gathering detailed accounts of human rights violations[1][3].
- **Focus Groups:** In some instances, focus group discussions may be used to gather collective insights from affected communities, providing a deeper understanding of shared experiences[2][4].
- **Remote Interviews:** When access to certain areas is difficult due to security concerns or restrictions, remote interviews via telephone or online platforms are used. These methods enable researchers to gather valuable information while safeguarding the safety of interviewees[1].

Limitations and Challenges

1. **Access Issues:** Researchers often face difficulties accessing specific areas due to political instability, government restrictions, or safety concerns. This can limit the ability to conduct in-depth field research or collect firsthand accounts from victims[1][3].

2. **Security Concerns:** The safety of both the researchers and the interviewees is a significant consideration. Protective measures must be in place to ensure confidentiality, which can sometimes restrict the depth of the information shared[3][4].
3. **Corroboration Difficulties:** Verifying the accuracy of information is particularly challenging in sensitive contexts where witnesses may be reluctant to share experiences due to fear of reprisals[3][4].
4. **Data Quality:** When relying on secondary data sources, there is always the potential for biases or inaccuracies. Researchers must rigorously vet sources to ensure the credibility of the data used[2][5].

In conclusion, the methodology for collecting data for human rights reports on the USA is thorough and involves a mix of interviews, field research, document analysis, and statistical data review. Despite facing challenges related to access, security, and data reliability, this approach ensures a comprehensive and ethical understanding of human rights conditions.

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Human Rights Overview

The human rights landscape in the United States in 2024 is shaped by complex political, economic, and social dynamics, with several key events having a profound impact.

Political Context

The political atmosphere in the U.S. is characterized by sharp divisions, particularly in light of the 2024 presidential election. Donald Trump, despite ongoing legal challenges, remains a central figure in the political scene, sparking concerns over the potential for violence and instability, similar to the events surrounding the January 6, 2021, Capitol riot. Experts have warned that extremist groups may pose significant threats to democratic processes and civil liberties throughout the election cycle[2]. The polarized electorate, with states divided between Trump and his opposition, notably Kamala Harris, underscores broader societal issues, including challenges to voting rights and the rise of anti-democratic sentiments[9].

Economic Context

Economically, the U.S. has seen increasing inequality and rising poverty, exacerbated by the end of pandemic-related financial assistance, such as the child tax credit. These disparities particularly affect marginalized communities, contributing to a growing racial wealth gap[1]. Although the Biden administration has implemented policies aimed at addressing economic inequities and providing protections for certain immigrant groups, systemic issues persist, including high incarceration rates and insufficient federal data protection laws, leaving individuals vulnerable to abuse by both government and private entities[1][3].

Social Context

Socially, the U.S. continues to grapple with serious human rights challenges. Police violence remains a prominent issue, particularly affecting Black Americans, with reports of disproportionate use of lethal force against them[3]. Additionally, there has been a concerning trend of states passing laws that restrict reproductive rights and protections for LGBTQ+ individuals[1]. The asylum process is also facing intense scrutiny, with restrictions that violate international human rights standards, often placing vulnerable individuals in perilous situations[1].

Significant Events

Several key events have shaped the human rights situation in the U.S. in 2024:

1. **2024 Presidential Election:** This election has been central not only to political discourse but also to debates over democracy and civil liberties. There are growing concerns about the potential for election-related violence and voter intimidation at polling places, posing risks to democratic integrity and voter participation[2][4].
2. **Legislation on Human Rights:** The introduction of the **Human Rights Defenders Protection Act** signals a commitment to global human rights advocacy, though

domestic policies continue to be criticized for failing to adequately address systemic racism and inequality[5].

3. **International Relations:** U.S. foreign policy continues to focus on sanctioning human rights violators globally, while facing criticism for military assistance to countries with poor human rights records[1][3].

In conclusion, the human rights situation in the United States in 2024 is marked by political unrest, economic inequality, and ongoing struggles for social justice. The outcome of the presidential election and upcoming legislative actions will likely have significant implications for the future of human rights in the country.

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Civil and Political Rights

The civil and political rights situation in the United States during 2024 has been marked by significant challenges in areas such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, arbitrary arrests, and instances of torture or ill-treatment. The return of Donald Trump to the presidency has heightened concerns about the erosion of democratic norms and civil liberties, leading to a tense political environment and escalating fears about political violence and threats to democracy.

Freedom of Expression

In 2024, the right to freedom of expression has faced increasing constraints, particularly around political discourse. The polarized political climate during the election period led to concerns about the safety of dissenting voices, with fears of retaliation against those critical of the administration. A poll conducted in October 2024 revealed that 81% of voters were worried about threats to democracy, while 73% were concerned about political violence[3]. This growing unease has contributed to a chilling effect on free speech, with media outlets and social media platforms under pressure to align with dominant political narratives.

Freedom of Assembly

The right to peaceful assembly has been increasingly curtailed, especially as state governments introduced legislation to limit protest rights. In 2024, sixteen states introduced 23 bills targeting protest activities, with five bills becoming law that criminalized certain forms of protest, such as blocking infrastructure or gathering near specific government properties[2]. For example, Mississippi's legislation requiring protest organizers to seek law enforcement approval before demonstrations can take place near government buildings has raised alarms about government overreach and suppression of dissent[2]. These legislative moves reflect broader concerns about the erosion of the right to protest in the United States.

Arbitrary Arrests

Arbitrary arrests have been a growing issue, particularly during protests against government actions. Law enforcement agencies have employed aggressive tactics in response to demonstrations, leading to incidents of disproportionate use of force. In January 2024, environmental activist Manuel Esteban Páez Terán was shot and killed during a police operation to dismantle protest encampments in Atlanta. Although police claimed that Páez Terán fired at officers first, an independent autopsy revealed that the activist was shot 57 times without any gunpowder residue on his hands, raising questions about the legitimacy of the police response[2]. This incident highlights a troubling trend of excessive force against peaceful protesters.

Instances of Torture or Ill-Treatment

Human rights violations, particularly at detention facilities, continue to be a major concern. The situation at Guantánamo Bay remains a significant issue, with thirty Muslim men still arbitrarily detained without due process. Many detainees have been subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment, with reports of inadequate medical care and prolonged solitary confinement. These practices violate both U.S. and international human rights standards[2]. Despite calls for accountability, the lack of legal and political will to address these abuses leaves detainees in a state of prolonged uncertainty and suffering.

Government Responses

The U.S. government's response to these civil rights challenges has been divided. While civil rights organizations have called for greater accountability and reform, particularly in law enforcement practices, the political climate under the Trump administration suggests an expansion of executive power that could further undermine civil liberties[4][6]. The Biden administration had previously attempted to introduce reforms but faced significant opposition, particularly in Congress, on issues such as police accountability and voting rights restoration for individuals with criminal records[8].

Overall Impact on the Population

The impact of these civil and political rights issues on the population has been profound. Many Americans feel increasingly disenfranchised, fearing that their fundamental freedoms are under threat. The combination of restrictive protest laws, arbitrary arrests, and ongoing human rights violations contributes to a climate of fear and uncertainty. As of 2024, public sentiment reflects a growing concern about the future of democracy in the United States, with many citizens expressing doubts about the protection of their civil liberties[3][4]. The government's inability or unwillingness to address these issues has left a significant portion of the population feeling alienated and powerless.

In conclusion, the civil and political rights situation in the U.S. during 2024 has been characterized by significant challenges, with restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, instances of arbitrary arrests and excessive use of force, and ongoing human rights violations at detention facilities. These developments pose a grave threat to democracy and individual freedoms, with implications that will likely persist as the political landscape continues to evolve.

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Rights of Specific Groups

In 2024, human rights conditions for various groups in the United States continue to reflect both significant challenges and areas of progress. This overview focuses on the status of women's rights, children's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, with examples of violations, legal protections, and notable case studies.

Women's Rights

The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 has had profound effects on women's reproductive rights, continuing into 2024. The Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* allowed states to implement more restrictive abortion laws, with many states enacting laws that either severely limit or ban abortions altogether. By 2024, more than half of U.S. states have imposed such restrictions, with significant implications for women's healthcare access[1][2]. These restrictions particularly affect women of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who face heightened challenges in accessing reproductive services[2].

The Biden administration has attempted to mitigate these effects through executive actions that aim to protect access to reproductive healthcare services, but many states continue to fight against these measures, exacerbating the divide between states with robust protections and those with restrictive laws[3].

Children's Rights

Children in the U.S. face a range of challenges, largely influenced by socio-economic factors and systemic issues. Reports indicate that the child welfare system often penalizes families living in poverty rather than offering adequate support. The disproportionate removal of Black and Indigenous children from their homes due to neglect allegations is a troubling trend[2]. The cessation of pandemic-era child tax credits in 2024 further contributes to rising child poverty rates, exacerbating the challenges faced by vulnerable children[1].

Additionally, children seeking asylum in the U.S. are subjected to harsh conditions under recent immigration policies. These children often face violence, neglect, and exploitation as they attempt to cross the U.S. border, with many being detained in overcrowded facilities[3].

LGBTQ+ Rights

LGBTQ+ individuals in the U.S. continue to face discrimination and violence, with transgender people, particularly those from racialized communities, at greater risk. In 2023, there was a significant rise in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, with 84 new laws enacted that curtail the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, especially targeting transgender people. These laws often cite religious freedom as a justification, but their effects are clear: they undermine the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals to access healthcare, employment, and protection under the law[3].

Transgender people are particularly vulnerable to violence, with reports showing they are nine times more likely to be victims of hate crimes than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. In

many states, LGBTQ+ protections, such as comprehensive hate crime laws, are still inconsistent, leaving many at risk[3][4].

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Ethnic and religious minorities in the U.S. continue to experience discrimination, systemic violence, and barriers to equal treatment. Black Americans remain disproportionately impacted by police violence, accounting for nearly 18.5% of deaths from police use of firearms, despite comprising only about 13% of the population[3]. Similarly, Indigenous women face alarmingly high rates of sexual violence, with 56% experiencing such violence, often due to jurisdictional gaps that hinder tribal authorities' ability to prosecute offenders[3].

Religious minorities, particularly Muslims, also face discrimination and hate crimes, often fueled by anti-Muslim rhetoric in political discourse. Additionally, asylum seekers from various ethnic backgrounds face severe obstacles, including arbitrary detention and expedited removals, which violate international human rights standards[1].

Progress and Legal Protections

Despite these challenges, there have been notable strides in advocating for human rights protections. The Biden administration has taken steps to address systemic racism through executive orders aimed at enhancing equity and inclusion in various sectors[1]. Legislative efforts, such as the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act, have sought to bolster protections for human rights advocates globally and domestically, signaling a positive shift toward more robust support for marginalized communities[6].

Conclusion

In summary, while some progress has been made in advancing human rights for women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic minorities in the U.S. during 2024, significant challenges remain. The rollback of reproductive rights, systemic discrimination, and barriers faced by vulnerable groups underscore the need for continued efforts from both federal and state governments to address these pressing issues.

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Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

The analysis of economic, social, and cultural rights in the United States for 2024 reveals significant challenges and developments regarding the right to health, education, and adequate housing. This overview highlights access issues, barriers, and improvements in these critical areas.

Right to Health

Access to Healthcare

The right to health encompasses availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of healthcare services. In 2024, disparities in healthcare access persist, particularly affecting marginalized groups such as low-income individuals and racial minorities. Economic accessibility remains a significant barrier; many Americans face high out-of-pocket costs despite insurance coverage. The expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act has improved access for some, yet many states have not adopted this expansion, leaving gaps in coverage for vulnerable populations[1][2].

Barriers

Barriers to healthcare access include systemic inequities that affect physical and economic accessibility. For instance, rural areas often lack sufficient healthcare facilities, leading to longer travel times for essential services. Additionally, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues and highlighted the inadequacies in mental health care access[2][5].

Improvements

Despite these challenges, there have been efforts to enhance healthcare access through telehealth services and community health initiatives aimed at underserved populations. These programs aim to bridge gaps in care and improve health outcomes by providing services directly within communities[1][4].

Right to Education

Educational Opportunities

The right to education in the U.S. is characterized by significant disparities based on socioeconomic status and geographic location. Public education funding largely depends on local property taxes, leading to inequitable resource distribution among schools. Students in affluent areas typically have access to better facilities and educational resources compared to those in low-income neighborhoods[1][3].

Barriers

Barriers include inadequate funding for public schools, especially in urban areas where poverty rates are high. These schools often struggle with overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and insufficient support staff. Additionally, systemic issues such as racial discrimination continue to affect educational equity, with minority students facing higher rates of suspension and expulsion[3][5].

Improvements

In 2024, there are ongoing discussions about reforming school funding models to ensure more equitable distribution of resources. Initiatives aimed at increasing teacher salaries and improving school infrastructure are also being implemented in various states[1][4].

Right to Adequate Housing

Housing Conditions

The right to adequate housing is increasingly under threat due to rising housing costs and a lack of affordable housing options across the U.S. Many families spend a disproportionate amount of their income on rent or mortgage payments, leading to housing instability and increased risk of homelessness[1][5].

Barriers

Significant barriers include zoning laws that restrict the development of affordable housing units and discriminatory practices that affect marginalized communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained housing security, with many facing eviction due to job loss or reduced income[1][3].

Improvements

In response to these challenges, some cities are implementing policies aimed at increasing affordable housing stock through incentives for developers. Additionally, federal initiatives are being proposed to address homelessness through increased funding for supportive housing programs[1][4].

Conclusion

In summary, while there are ongoing efforts to address economic, social, and cultural rights related to health, education, and housing in the United States in 2024, significant barriers remain. The interplay between systemic inequities and policy responses will be crucial in shaping the future landscape of these rights.

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Refugees and Migrants

In 2024, the situation for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in the United States remains complex and challenging. Various factors, including legal frameworks, living conditions, and socio-economic barriers, significantly impact these groups.

Treatment and Living Conditions

Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers in the U.S. face significant hurdles upon arrival. The backlog of asylum applications has reached unprecedented levels, with over two million pending cases. This backlog can result in waiting periods of up to seven years for adjudication, severely affecting their ability to integrate into society and support themselves financially[1][2]. Currently, asylum seekers must wait at least 180 days after filing their application before they can apply for work authorization, which often leads to increased vulnerability to exploitation and abuse[1].

The living conditions for many asylum seekers are precarious. Many live in temporary shelters or with family members while awaiting their hearings. Reports indicate that some are subjected to poor living conditions, which can exacerbate their mental health challenges due to prolonged uncertainty about their future[2].

Migrant Workers

Migrant workers also face exploitation and abuse in various forms. Many are employed in low-wage jobs without adequate protections or benefits. Reports from organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlight that migrant workers often lack access to social security, healthcare, and education, making them highly vulnerable to exploitation by employers[6]. Furthermore, discrimination based on nationality or immigration status can lead to further marginalization within the workforce.

Access to Asylum Procedures

Accessing asylum procedures has become increasingly difficult due to restrictive policies. In June 2024, President Biden issued a proclamation temporarily suspending asylum applications for individuals arriving at the southern border without a prior appointment through the CBP One app[1]. This policy has drawn criticism for limiting access to legal protections for those fleeing persecution.

Moreover, the current processing system is overwhelmed. The average time for an asylum case in immigration court is approximately 4.25 years, leaving many asylum seekers in a state of legal limbo[4]. This delay not only affects their mental health but also increases their dependency on humanitarian aid.

Instances of Exploitation and Abuse

Exploitation of refugees and migrant workers is a pressing issue. Many asylum seekers are at risk of human trafficking, especially when they lack work authorization and financial independence[1]. Reports indicate that individuals may be coerced into accepting unsafe working conditions or inadequate pay due to their vulnerable status.

Additionally, women and unaccompanied minors face heightened risks of abuse. Discrimination against these groups can lead to further isolation and vulnerability in both social and economic contexts[6].

Domestic and International Responses

Domestic Responses

The U.S. government has introduced several legislative measures aimed at addressing these issues. The Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act (H.R. 1325) proposes to expedite work permits for asylum seekers from 180 days to just 30 days after filing their applications[1]. This change aims to reduce dependency on aid and allow asylum seekers to contribute economically while awaiting their claims.

However, despite these proposals, federal and state actions have increasingly made it difficult for migrants to enter the country legally. The U.S. spends billions annually on detaining potential refugees and asylum seekers rather than investing in a more humane immigration system[2][3].

International Responses

International organizations like the UNHCR continue to advocate for fair treatment of asylum seekers and refugees within the U.S., emphasizing the need for efficient processing systems that respect human rights[8]. They work with local governments to ensure that refugees have access to essential services such as education and healthcare while awaiting their claims' outcomes.

In conclusion, while there are ongoing efforts both domestically and internationally to improve the situation for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in the U.S., significant challenges remain. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that balances humanitarian needs with legal frameworks.

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Legal Framework and Accountability

The legal framework governing human rights in the United States is complex and multifaceted, involving a combination of federal laws, state laws, international treaties, and judicial interpretations. In 2024, significant developments have emerged that impact human rights legislation and accountability mechanisms.

New Legislation and Reforms

Human Rights Defenders Protection Act of 2024:

One of the most notable pieces of legislation introduced is the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act. This bill aims to provide enhanced protections for individuals facing reprisals for defending human rights globally. It establishes an interagency framework to support human rights defenders (HRDs) and mandates that U.S. embassies be better equipped to assist them. The bill reflects a commitment to integrating human rights into U.S. foreign policy and elevating the status of HRDs within government operations[1][3].

Judicial Independence and Reforms:

There are ongoing efforts to strengthen judicial independence and accountability within the U.S. legal system. Initiatives focus on improving transparency in judicial processes and ensuring that judges can operate free from external pressures. This includes reforms aimed at enhancing self-governance within the judiciary, which are essential for maintaining public trust in legal institutions[8].

Role of the Judiciary

The judiciary plays a critical role in interpreting laws related to human rights and ensuring accountability for violations. However, challenges persist regarding the effectiveness of judicial remedies. Cases involving alleged human rights violations often face hurdles, including reluctance from prosecutors to pursue charges against law enforcement officials.

For instance, a study by UC Berkeley's Human Rights Clinic highlighted systemic failures in holding U.S. Customs Border Patrol (CBP) agents accountable for extrajudicial killings. The report noted that no CBP agent has been prosecuted for unlawful killings, indicating a significant gap in accountability mechanisms[4]. This lack of accountability raises concerns about impunity for state actors involved in human rights abuses.

Impunity for Human Rights Violations

Despite existing laws intended to protect human rights, issues of impunity remain prevalent. High-profile cases illustrate this ongoing challenge:

- **Extrajudicial Killings by Law Enforcement:** Families of victims killed by law enforcement have often found it difficult to achieve justice through domestic courts.

The failure to prosecute officers involved in these incidents exemplifies a broader trend of impunity that undermines public confidence in the justice system[4][5].

- **International Accountability Mechanisms:** In cases where national courts fail to provide justice, victims have sought recourse through international bodies. For example, complaints have been filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding extrajudicial killings by U.S. law enforcement, highlighting the need for external oversight when domestic mechanisms falter[4].

Conclusion

In 2024, while new legislation such as the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act signals progress in protecting human rights advocates, significant challenges remain regarding judicial accountability and impunity for violations. The effectiveness of reforms aimed at enhancing judicial independence will be crucial in addressing these issues moving forward. Continued advocacy for both domestic reforms and international accountability mechanisms will be essential to ensure that human rights are upheld and violators are held accountable.

Citations:

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International Relations and Human Rights

In 2024, the United States' approach to international human rights has been marked by legislative reforms, engagement with global human rights organizations, and a complex balancing of geopolitical priorities, often creating tensions between its international commitments and domestic practices. This dynamic is particularly evident in the Biden administration's foreign policy, with key actions and developments underscoring the nation's ongoing commitment to human rights advocacy, while at times confronting contradictions in its approach.

Legislative Initiatives and Engagement

A major legislative development this year is the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act of 2024, which aims to create a more robust framework for protecting individuals and groups facing persecution for advocating human rights worldwide. The bill seeks to incorporate the protection of human rights defenders into U.S. foreign policy, involving interagency cooperation to provide diplomatic and development support for these activists[1]. If passed, this bill would represent a significant step in aligning U.S. foreign policy with its stated commitment to human rights and could strengthen the nation's engagement with international organizations like the United Nations.

In addition, the U.S. has maintained a strong stance on supporting international human rights through its Foreign Policy Framework, particularly emphasizing democracy promotion and the enforcement of human rights standards. Through mechanisms such as democracy assistance programs and targeted sanctions, the U.S. has consistently sought to address human rights abuses in countries like Myanmar, Russia, and China. However, critics point out that the U.S.'s human rights agenda can be inconsistent, often shaped by strategic alliances, as seen in its relations with Saudi Arabia and India, both of which have been accused of significant human rights violations but continue to receive substantial U.S. support[2][6].

International Pressure and Sanctions

While the U.S. has positioned itself as a global leader on human rights, international organizations have often raised concerns about the U.S.'s own record, particularly in areas such as racial justice, immigration rights, and its treatment of marginalized communities. Reports from Human Rights Watch have emphasized that while the U.S. is quick to condemn abuses abroad, it has been less willing to address systemic human rights issues within its own borders, including its incarceration system and police brutality against Black Americans[3]. Additionally, international bodies have put pressure on the U.S. to adhere more consistently to international human rights standards, particularly through treaty bodies like the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Moreover, international sanctions targeting U.S. allies like Saudi Arabia, in response to human rights abuses, have led to a perception that the U.S. is not as committed to holding its allies accountable as it is to pressuring adversarial states. This has raised questions about the U.S.'s credibility in its global human rights advocacy[3].

Impact on Domestic Human Rights Situation

The influence of international human rights advocacy has had a dual effect on the U.S. domestic landscape. On the one hand, legislative efforts such as the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act suggest a continued commitment to upholding human rights in foreign policy[1]. On the other hand, domestic challenges persist, particularly under the shadow of the 2024 election cycle. With the return of Donald Trump to power, there is concern among human rights advocates that U.S. foreign policy may shift toward prioritizing strategic alliances over human rights considerations, weakening international human rights agreements and pushing the U.S. toward a more isolationist stance[5].

Furthermore, selective outrage toward human rights violations abroad has led to criticisms that the U.S. lacks the moral authority to address domestic human rights concerns such as immigration policies, racial injustice, and economic inequality. The inconsistency in U.S. foreign policy, often driven by geopolitical and economic interests, risks undermining efforts to improve the country's own human rights situation and diminish the credibility of its advocacy abroad[6].

In conclusion, the year 2024 has been a year of both progress and contradiction in U.S. international relations concerning human rights. While legislative efforts show promise in strengthening the U.S.'s global human rights commitments, domestic and international pressures suggest that the path forward remains complex. The ability of the U.S. to reconcile its international human rights objectives with domestic realities will continue to shape its role on the global stage.

Citations:

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Recommendations

1. Reform Law Enforcement Practices

- **End Excessive Use of Force:**
 - Implement nationwide mandatory training for law enforcement agencies on de-escalation techniques and mental health crisis intervention to reduce incidents of police violence, particularly against marginalized communities[1][5].
 - Allocate funds for community-based policing programs to foster trust and cooperation between police and local communities[2].
- **Establish Independent Oversight:**
 - Create independent civilian oversight bodies in every jurisdiction to investigate cases of police misconduct and ensure accountability for racial profiling, excessive force, and other violations[1][4].

2. Address Racial Discrimination

- **Data Collection and Transparency:**
 - Mandate the collection and publication of disaggregated data on police interactions, arrests, and use of force to identify patterns of racial discrimination and guide policy reforms[5][2].
- **End Disenfranchisement:**
 - Restore voting rights to individuals with past criminal convictions to promote democratic participation and address racial inequalities in the electoral system[1][4].

3. Protect Asylum Seekers' Rights

- **Reform Asylum Policies:**
 - Repeal policies such as the “asylum ban” that limit access to asylum for migrants fleeing violence and persecution[3].
 - Establish humane reception centers at ports of entry and expedite processing to ensure asylum seekers are treated with dignity and fairness[1][5].
- **End Detention Practices:**
 - Phase out the use of private detention facilities for immigrants and ensure that all detention centers meet international standards for human rights and due process[1][6].

4. Combat Economic Inequality

- **Enhance Social Safety Nets:**
 - Reinstate expanded child tax credits and implement policies that target poverty reduction, particularly among racially marginalized communities, through increased investments in education, healthcare, and affordable housing[3][5].

5. Strengthen Reproductive Rights

- **Protect Access to Reproductive Health Care:**
 - Safeguard access to reproductive health services, including abortion, by ensuring that state and federal laws do not disproportionately harm marginalized groups, particularly people of color, low-income individuals, and rural communities[5][2].

Recommendations for International Bodies

1. Monitor Human Rights Violations

- **Regular Reporting:**
 - Urge international human rights organizations to conduct independent, comprehensive assessments of the U.S. human rights situation. This includes monitoring systemic racism, police brutality, economic inequality, and the rights of asylum seekers[4][5].

2. Engage in Diplomatic Pressure

- **Leverage International Agreements:**
 - Utilize frameworks such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to hold the U.S. accountable for its human rights obligations and encourage reforms to protect vulnerable populations, especially in areas such as racial justice and asylum policies[4][3].

Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations

1. Advocacy and Education

- **Raise Awareness:**
 - Launch nationwide campaigns to educate the public about systemic racism, the importance of police accountability, and the economic inequalities that affect marginalized groups. These campaigns should aim to empower communities to take action and advocate for policy change[2][6].
- **Support Grassroots Movements:**
 - Strengthen partnerships with local organizations working on the ground to combat police violence, support economic justice, and advocate for immigrant rights. Civil society should amplify the voices of these organizations and ensure that their efforts receive the necessary resources and attention[6][5].

2. Legal Assistance

- **Provide Legal Aid:**

- Expand legal support services to individuals facing unjust treatment within the criminal justice system, particularly those impacted by racial profiling, police violence, or immigration detention. This should include providing pro bono legal representation and resources for asylum seekers navigating the legal system[6].

3. Promote Policy Change

- **Engage in Lobbying Efforts:**
 - Work closely with lawmakers and other stakeholders to advocate for meaningful reforms in policing practices, immigration laws, and social welfare policies. Lobby for policies that address systemic inequalities, with a focus on racial justice, equitable economic opportunities, and the protection of civil rights for all[2][6].

Citations:

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Conclusion

The 2024 human rights report on the United States underscores significant and ongoing challenges that continue to affect marginalized communities across the nation. Racial inequality and police violence remain pressing issues, with Black individuals disproportionately impacted by law enforcement practices. Economic disparities have deepened, exacerbated by rising poverty and the growing racial wealth gap, while legislative measures restricting reproductive rights and targeting LGBTQ+ individuals threaten the civil liberties of many. The report also highlights the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers and the persistence of arbitrary detentions at Guantanamo Bay, marking serious violations of both domestic and international human rights standards.

The persistent nature of these issues calls for ongoing vigilance, robust advocacy, and comprehensive reforms. The United States must prioritize measures to address systemic racism, improve economic equality, protect the rights of marginalized groups, and ensure that immigration policies align with international human rights principles. It is critical that policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizens collaborate to bring about meaningful change, ensuring that the country upholds its commitments to human dignity and justice. Only through sustained efforts and accountability can the United States hope to improve its human rights situation and secure a future of equality and respect for all individuals.

The need for continuous monitoring and action remains paramount, as only then can real progress be made toward a more just and equitable society.

Appendices

Appendix A: Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues

This appendix provides a collection of statistics related to key human rights issues in the United States, highlighting significant concerns.

Human Rights Issue	Statistic
Incarceration Rate	The U.S. has one of the highest incarceration rates globally, with over 800 police killings reported in 2023.
Racial Disparity in Policing	Black individuals are killed by police at nearly three times the rate of white individuals.
Poverty Rate	The national poverty rate increased significantly following the cessation of pandemic-related financial support.
Economic Inequality	The racial wealth gap remains high, exacerbating economic disparities across communities.
Reproductive Rights Restrictions	Numerous states enacted laws limiting access to abortion and reproductive healthcare.
LGBTQ+ Rights Challenges	Increased legislative restrictions on the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals have been noted.
Child Labor Violations	Reports indicate a rise in child labor cases and weakened protections against exploitation.

Appendix B: Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms

This glossary provides definitions of key terms related to human rights and legal issues referenced in the report.

- **Human Rights:** Fundamental rights and freedoms to which all individuals are entitled, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnicity, or any other status.
- **Incarceration Rate:** The number of individuals held in prisons or jails per 100,000 population.
- **Racial Wealth Gap:** The disparity in wealth between different racial and ethnic groups.
- **LGBTQ+ Rights:** Legal and social rights pertaining to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or others.
- **Reproductive Rights:** Legal rights and freedoms relating to reproduction and reproductive health.
- **Extrajudicial Killings:** Killings carried out without legal process or trial.
- **Political Imprisonment:** The imprisonment of individuals for their political beliefs or actions