

HUMAN RIGHTS: A TIME FOR REDEDICATION

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It is important for all of us to recognize the new task the world community has assumed. In the area of human rights, the U.N.'s past work has largely been devoted to the codification of international standards which were designed to elaborate on the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights thirty years ago. Now, the world community must turn and approach the even more vital, but more difficult task of implementation.

In the United States, we must take steps to remove the blemishes that exist on our own record. International attention has already been drawn to the plight of Native Americans, blacks, chicanos, the "Wilmington 10", and inmates of specific prisons of this country. Our vulnerability on these points diminishes our capacity to assert leadership and establish credibility on human rights issues.

Another impediment is our failure to ratify a number of major human rights treaties of international organizations. President Truman signed the Genocide Convention and sent it to the Senate in 1949, but it still sits there.



Let us hope that 1979 will be the year for its ratification. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights signed by President Carter last year, and submitted to the Senate this year, also await ratification.

In the past year, the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission has made constructive efforts to turn toward the implementation of its principles. For years the focus of the Commission's activities was only directed at South Africa, Chile and the alleged violations in the Israeli occupies territories. Now it is becoming clear that the Commission is willing and able to act from a broader perspective. It will no longer make scapegoats of a few nations. No region or continent can be immune from human rights concerns. The Human Rights Commission demonstrated this new maturity last March by taking unprecedented action with respect to reports of serious violations in nine countries: Indonesia, Equitorial Guinea, Malawi, Uganda, South Korea, Ethiopia, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay.

In this modern era, thirty years after the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, we have a long agenda before us. In recent years, officially sanctioned political kidnappings have become a deliberate policy of certain governments. As a result, thousands of persons have been detained by government security forces, tortured, and perhaps killed. Yet the fate of these missing persons remains enclosed in govern-



ment silence.

We must seek to make midnight arrests, summary executions, torture and failure to account for the disappeared, alien to the experience of any nation. Our concern must be maintained for human beings whose rights are being denied, whatever the reason.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights challenges us to put into practice the principles so carefully laid down by member governments. As worldwide concern for human rights has grown, I urge that we seize this opportunity to make a quantum leap forward -- to end human rights abuses and encourage Member nations to foster new understanding for the rights of individuals everywhere.