



Ethical Action Report



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The *Ethical Action Report* represents the views of the Ethical Action Office of the American Ethical Union and the American Humanist Association. The American Ethical Union takes ethical positions on public affairs only through resolutions adopted by its Assembly or Board. Past AEU resolutions are available, searchable by date or topic at: <http://www.ethicalaction.org/aeuresolutions/index.html>.

Criminal Justice:

Protect Prisoners' Rights to Challenge Wrongful Convictions: Oppose the Streamlined Procedures Act (S.1088 & H.R. 3035)

Urge your senators and representatives on the Judiciary Committee to protect the rights of the innocent and wrongly convicted.

BACKGROUND

The Streamlined Procedures Act (S.1088 & H.R. 3035) eliminates state prisoners' access to federal courts to review their criminal cases. Introduced in the spring of 2005 and now in committee mark-up, this legislation, contrary to the title, does little to speed the appeals process. It instead increases the likelihood of innocent people being executed and undermines the integrity of the criminal justice system.

For many on death row, it's the court of last resort for those who are innocent and wrongfully convicted. This act would specifically prevent federal courts from reviewing death penalty cases that involve allegations of cruel and unusual punishment or inadequate legal representation during the sentencing period.

A broad coalition of activists, current and retired judges, and former federal and state prosecutors from across the political spectrum have come forward in opposition to the Streamlined Procedures Act (S.1088 & H.R. 3035).

ACTION

Tell your senators and representatives on the Judiciary Committee to oppose the Streamlined Procedures Act (S.1088 & H.R. 3035). It's unconscionable to jeopardize the rights of prisoners.

To view the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee visit:

<http://judiciary.senate.gov/members.cfm>

To view the members of the House Judiciary Committee visit:

<http://judiciary.house.gov/CommitteeMembership.aspx>

Human Rights Abuses:

Demand Accountability and Prevention of Torture Abuses

Raise your ethical voice against torture.

BACKGROUND

On October 5th, the Senate overwhelmingly (90-9) passed an amendment to the Department of Defense spending bill to prevent torture. Led by Senator John McCain (R-AZ), the provision contains guidelines on detention practices and humane interrogation for all Department of Defense employees. The amendment will prohibit "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" (as defined by the U.S. Constitution and the United Nations Convention Against Torture). Torture is ethically unacceptable and violates the eighth amendment of the U.S. Constitution as well as international law.

Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) is expected to offer an amendment that would create an independent commission to review allegations of prisoner abuse by U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, Cuba, and elsewhere.

The White House, however, has threatened a presidential veto against both of these provisions, arguing that they will get in the way of the so-called "war on terror."

Invite a speaker from the Center for the Victims of Torture to your local ethical society, to learn more about the issues surrounding torture. The Center "works locally, nationally, and internationally to heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families, their communities and to stop torture worldwide."

For more information on the Center for the Victims of Torture's Speakers Bureau please visit:

<http://www.cvt.org/main.php/Advocacy/SpeakersBureau>

ACTION

Tell President Bush that threatening a veto is simply inexcusable and unethical. Urge the Bush Administration to prevent torture abuses and support an independent commission. Demand that President Bush affirm Americans' commitment to justice and the rule of law.

Save Darfur, Sudan:

Support the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (S. 1462 and H.R. 3127)

Demand that Congress take immediate action to alleviate the suffering of the people of Darfur.

BACKGROUND

In previous Ethical Action Reports, we have asked you to raise your ethical voices to demand united action, leadership, and accountability to bring an end to the genocide in Darfur, Sudan by putting pressure on President Bush and raising awareness of the atrocities. Now it's time to put pressure on Congress.

Congress has labeled the atrocities in Darfur as genocide. Remind Congress of their ethical responsibility to act. The Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (S. 1462 and H.R. 3127) is at a critical juncture. It's expected to go to a floor vote in mid-November.

The Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (H.R. 3127) calls for:

- strong support of the African Union mission, including a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) role;
- includes several individual sanctions and prohibitions;
- cooperation with the International Criminal Court; and
- requires the Bush Administration to report on critical issues.

The Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (S. 1462) calls for:

- the suspension of Sudan's membership from the United Nations General Assembly, permissible under Article 5 of the UN Charter;
- requires the appointment of a Special Envoy for Sudan and northern Uganda;
- a new UN Security Resolution which supports:
 - the expansion of the AU Mission;
 - imposes sanctions against the Government of Sudan; and
 - extends the military arms embargo to cover the entire Government of Sudan.

ACTION

Urge your senators and representatives to support the much needed Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (S. 1462 and H.R. 3127).

Labor Rights: Support Fair Trade this Holiday Season

As the holiday season approaches, combine your ethics with your consumer power by promoting justice for farmers and artisans by supporting fair trade gifts.

BACKGROUND

A common definition of fair trade as defined by Co-op America is a system of exchange that honors producers, communities, consumers, and the environment. It's a model for the global economy rooted in people-to-people connections, justice, and sustainability.

Fair Trade helps to ensure that farmers and artisans in developing countries receive a fair price for their products, encourages sustainable practices, and invests in local communities.

For more information visit Co-op America at <http://www.coopamerica.org>.

ACTION

Show your commitment to economic and social justice by purchasing fairly traded gifts this holiday season.

For fairly traded gift ideas we suggest:

Co-op America Green Pages

A directory of thousands of green, environmentally responsible, socially responsible products and services.

<http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/greenpages>

Global Exchange

Global Exchange is a membership-based international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic, and environmental justice around the world.

<http://www.globalexchange.org>

NOVICA, an association with National Geographic

In association with National Geographic, NOVICA serves as an online arts agent for more than 1,700 artists in countries around the world. Artists set their own prices, and NOVICA helps eliminate numerous intermediaries, transferring the savings to the creator.

<http://www.novica.com>

SERRV International

SERRV International is a non-profit organization that strives to promote living wages, women's rights and eco-friendly production through partnerships with small-scale artisan and farmer groups.

<http://www.agreatergift.org>

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United States Senate
or
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Visit <http://www.senate.gov> or
<http://www.house.gov> to use your
representatives' e-mail contact forms.

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