

International Human Rights Day actions condemn U.S. crimes

written by Bayani
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Los Angeles, Dec. 10. Photo: Brenda Gutierrez

On Dec. 4, 1950, the United Nations General Assembly formally established International Human Rights Day. This day was to be observed every year on Dec. 10 in honor of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on Dec. 10, 1948.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights seeks to guarantee some basic individual protections — freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of thought, religion and association, and the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Interestingly, one article of the declaration guarantees “the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services.”

The great irony is that despite being one of the signers of this declaration, the United States has continuously violated this article, not only by its actions all over the world, but at home as well.

So on this past International Human Rights Day, people all over the world organized actions to condemn the U.S. as a violator of human rights.



Washington, D.C., Dec. 7. Photo: Teko Alejo

Washington, D.C.

In Washington, D.C., a coalition of organizations sponsored a demonstration on Dec. 7 called “People and Planet over Profit” to raise this call. The coalition gathered about 70 people to rally in front of Union Station and condemned the U.S.’s blatant violations of human rights.

Among the organizations supporting the action were the Malaya Movement, the Baltimore Peoples Power Assembly (PPA), Pan-African Community Action, the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), DMV Bolivia Solidarity, D.C.’s International

Womxn's Alliance, Anakbayan D.C., and BAYAN USA.

Ameenah Salaam of CWA, which has built strong connections with labor unions in the Dominican Republic and the Philippines, spoke about building international workers' power: "Instead of letting corporations divide and conquer, we've adopted an international perspective on what it means to fight corporate power and stop the race to the bottom."

Salaam spoke about the Filipino call center workers who refused to scab during the Verizon strikes in 2016 and how that built solidarity between workers there and in the U.S. She also reported that the Philippines is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a union activist, and demanded that not one more dollar be sent to the Duterte administration until human rights violations are investigated.

Speakers also raised that human rights can also be used as a pretext to invade and intervene in countries that are in the crosshairs of imperialism. Steven Ceci, representing the PPA in Baltimore, said: "We need to be aware that human rights can be a false flag, because there's such a thing as 'humanitarian imperialism.'... So when we talk about human rights, we need to be very clear about what type of human rights."



Los Angeles, Dec. 10. SLL photo

Los Angeles

On Dec. 10, some 200 people and over 29 organizations in Los Angeles County held a series of rallies and marches to several consulate offices condemning Donald Trump, U.S. wars and interventions by both the Democratic and Republican parties, and Washington's racist targeting of migrants and their children.

Nikole Cababa, national secretary general of BAYAN USA and one of the key organizers of the event, said: "We're concerned about the growing displacement of families who face the wrath of a Trump administration that only dehumanizes and scapegoats them for a crisis the U.S. has a hand in. While Trump pours billions into its destructive wars, families in the U.S. suffer."

At the El Salvadoran and Ethiopian consulates, Walter Ruiz "Graywolf," director of the American Indian Movement Southern California (AIM SoCal), reminded everyone

about the people whose stolen land they were standing on: Indigenous people who were displaced and massacred for U.S. economic interests.

He noted that the massacres continue with the recent death of 16-year-old Guatemalan migrant Carlos Vásquez: “I don’t want to change the person in charge, I want to change the system that allows these people to be in charge. We live in economic slavery.”

Jasmin Tobar of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) then condemned the newly elected Salvadoran president, Nayib Bukele, for attacking the progressive movement there with increased militarization of the region.

At the Ethiopian Consulate, Tadios Belay of the International Migrants Alliance exposed the massive displacement of African migrants and its root cause, U.S. foreign policy. “The U.S. government is spending billions of dollars in Africa funding civil wars. ... The U.S. has over 50 military bases in Africa currently,” said Belay. “We must end U.S. militarism at home and abroad.”

The final consulate visited was that of Bolivia. Juan Baldelomar, a Bolivian activist from the city of Cochabamba, condemned the U.S.-supported coup in Bolivia and said of the legitimate president, Evo Morales: “He is a socialist, and he was able to get millions out of poverty. We were able to reduce poverty from a horrible 38 percent to 16 percent. He built hundreds of schools, hospitals, sports arenas and miles of road to help families like mine in Bolivia.”

At the Honduran and Filipino consulates, a speaker from the Socialist Unity Party and others exposed the various assaults by U.S. imperialism on these countries and urged a continuation of the type of unity it took to bring the organizations together for this very successful event in defense of human rights all over the world.

Co-sponsors of the event included AIM SoCal, BAYAN USA, the Border Angels, CISPES-LA, Guatemaya LA Mujeres Resistiendo, the Human Rights Alliance for Child Refugees & Families, the International Migrants Alliance, Me Too Survivors' March International, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, Occupy ICE LA, PUSO SoCal, Struggle-La Lucha newspaper, the Socialist Unity Party/Partido de Socialismo Unido and Unión del Barrio.

Solidarity with Cuba

On the same day as the Los Angeles action, a multiplatform “anti-imperialist tide” refuted the U.S. slanders against the blockaded island of Cuba.

A twitter storm with hashtags #UnblockCuba, #NoMasBloqueo and #DDHHCuba, supported by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People and video posts from Cubainformacion.tv, uplifted Cuba’s real advances in fundamental human rights — not just in Cuba, where literacy, health care and homes are a human right, but through its international leadership and solidarity.

As Gail Walker, executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), tweeted: “I’m tired of the lies about #Cuba. The truth is Cuba is a world leader in health, education and fighting climate change. Let’s honor Human Rights Day by telling the truth about Cuba.”

John Parker contributed to this report.

