

Report derides U. S. human rights' failures

By Sanjay Suri
Special to Sentinel-Voice
 LONDON (IPS/GIN) — Amnesty International released an annual report that blames the United States for failing to set world standards on human rights.

"As the world's most powerful state, the USA sets the standard for government behavior globally," but the U.S. has "distinguished itself in recent years through its defiance of international law," the report said.

Like last year, the focus was on detentions at U.S.-occupied Guantanamo, Cuba. The report said hundreds continue to be detained there, and more than 100 were transferred out of that center last year.

The report was critical of U.S. failures domestically, as well. "Soldiers refusing to

serve in Iraq on grounds of conscience were imprisoned. Prisoners continued to experience ill-treatment at the hands of police officers and prison guards. Dozens of people died after police used tasers (electro-shock weapons) against them."

But while being critical of the position with the U.S. on specific counts, the thrust of Amnesty International's controversial position was that the U.S. carries the responsibility of setting an example for the rest of the world.

The bulk of the report collates human rights issues through 2007 in the various country reports. Amnesty International particularly highlighted issues in the U.S., China, Russia and the EU.

The group's report made the following demands:

- China must live up to the

human rights promises it made around the Olympic Games and allow free speech and freedom of the press, as well as end "re-education through labor."

- The U.S. must close the Guantanamo detention camp and secret detention centers; either prosecute the detainees under fair trial standards or release them, and unequivocally reject the use of torture and ill-treatment.

- Russia must show greater tolerance for political dissent and show no tolerance for impunity on human rights abuses in Chechnya.

- The EU must investigate the complicity of its member states in 'renditions' of terrorist suspects and set the same bar on human rights for its own members as it does for other countries.

"The most powerful must

lead by example," said Amnesty International's secretary general, Irene Khan, at the May 28 launch of the report.

The report also draws attention to severe violations in other regions. "The human rights flashpoints in Darfur, Zimbabwe, Gaza, Iraq and Myanmar demand immediate action," Khan said.

The report said that 60 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations, people are still tortured or ill-treated in at least 81 countries. They face unfair trials in at least 54 countries and are not allowed to speak freely in at least 77 countries.

The report highlighted the following trends through 2007:

- Targeting of civilians

by armed groups and government forces with impunity,

- Pervasive violence against women,

- Promotion of torture and ill-treatment as acceptable modes of intelligence gathering,

- Suppression of dissent and attacks on journalists and activists,

- Lack of protection for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants,

- Denial of economic and social rights,

- Evasion of corporate accountability for human rights abuses.

Much of the Amnesty report continues as before to be based on newspaper and other reports. This seems particularly to be the case with China.

"Based on public reports, Amnesty International estimated that at least 470 people were executed and 1,860 people sentenced to death during 2007 (in China), although the true figures were believed to be much higher," the report said. It also highlighted the situation in Tibet and other publicized instances of violations.

The section on Iraq exposes acutely Amnesty International's limitations by way of investigations on the ground.

The report is really a summing up of familiar problems already reported on in mainstream media.

The report notes that "thousands of civilians, including children, were killed or injured amid continuing sectarian and other violence. All sides involved in the fighting committed gross human rights violations, some of which amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity."

Concerning Pakistan, the report summarizes the political events around the confrontation with President Pervez Musharraf and also blames the U.S. for backing him.

"The hollowness of the U.S. administration's call for democracy and freedom abroad was displayed in its continued support of President Pervez Musharraf as he arrested thousands of lawyers, journalists, human rights defenders and political activists," Khan said.

But while highlighting abuses of rights, the report speaks also of growing protests against such violations.

The report said, "black-suited lawyers in Pakistan, saffron-robed monks in Myanmar, 43.7 million individuals standing up on Oct. 17, 2007, to demand action against poverty — all were vibrant reminders last year of a global citizenry determined to stand up for human rights and hold their leaders to account."

Sanjay Suri writes for the Final Call.

Your Horoscope Says... June 19-25

ARIES

This week will bring a tendency to dwell on a past betrayal. Your feelings of suspicion are well-founded. However, do not personalize it. Work against the harmful act but not against the person who committed it.

Soul Affirmation: I am what I consistently do.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 6, 23

TAURUS

Look forward to excellent financial news based on something you're likely to do this week. Wow! It's about time. This week might be an excellent week to window shop for a dream vacation or luxury purchase. You can even window shop in your imagination for the best possible dream vacation location!

Soul Affirmation: Smooth communications is the key to my success this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 18, 44

GEMINI

In the spiritual realm appearance is not important but in the physical realm, looking good matters a great deal. Love has a foot in both realms. It is your challenge to balance the spiritual and physical aspects of love this week.

Soul Affirmation: Slow and steady is an enjoyable way to go.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 13

CANCER

Stand up and get ready. Be a public speaker this week. Any subject you choose is ripe for your "rap." Spin the tale. Tell the story. People will be fascinated by the way you see things. They'll be impressed. Watch out for a jealous friend when attention is on you!

Soul Affirmation: I make the first step, and the Universe will come to my aid.

Lucky Numbers: 24, 32, 53

LEO

Be as sharp as you can be this week. Make being alert a personal challenge. Watch carefully for details that might otherwise escape your notice as you search for the best way to get things done at work. Be steadfast in your determination, and don't be pulled into conflict with coworkers.

Soul Affirmation: There are other fish in the sea waiting for me.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 23, 27

VIRGO

What do you do when you're not as lucky as usual? Slow the game down. Risk less. Bet conservatively in all areas of your life. Restrain yourself. Give the job at hand your attention. Live in the present, and enjoy what is rather than in anticipation of what luck might have brought.

Soul Affirmation: Truth is revealed in the smallest grain of sand.

Lucky Numbers: 27, 41, 52

LIBRA

Like-mindedness is going to be hard to achieve among your coworkers, but there are likely to be a few who see things as you do. Choose carefully and find someone to walk with you on this week's journey. Some words of encouragement might be needed to enlist the person you choose.

Soul Affirmation: My needs will be met if I just ask.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 9, 14

SCORPIO

Where are you going in such a hurry? What you want you already have. Stop looking around yourself trying to find out what's missing. Nothing is missing. The best kind of discovery this week is self-discovery.

Soul Affirmation: I get because I give.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 18, 45

SAGITTARIUS

Knowing and accepting your love

nature is extremely important. Don't try to claim that it is as society says it should be. Acknowledge the fact that your love and friendship are often inseparable. You like to be in an adventure with your lover, just as you would a partner or a friend. Create this situation by holding the truth of your nature in consciousness.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the love that others have for me.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 24, 47

CAPRICORN

Dive into it! Don't be intimidated by the unknown. Your adventurous spirit can take you to a new place of celebration this week. If you can, bring someone along who can celebrate in the same manner with you. Harmony and peace is the motto that you should chant when you accomplish what you want to do!

Soul Affirmation: Communication is a skeleton key that fits many doors.

Lucky Numbers: 30, 31, 32

AQUARIUS

This week would be good for getting your house in order so you can spend the extra time outdoors enjoying the company of others. With an orderly habitat waiting for you, you'll have a head start for the task you have to accomplish.

Soul Affirmation: I open up to the Universe. The Universe opens up to me.

Lucky Numbers: 39, 49, 52

PISCES

Don't spread yourself too thin. But if you'll need to move around in many different circles this week, your spirit should be high and your vibes are strong for meeting new people. You will be receiving a piece or two of great news. Expect the unexpected. You'll be pleasantly surprised!

Soul Affirmation: I give love and love gives to me.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 50, 55

EMPLOYMENT


Housing Authority of the City of Las Vegas
 P. O. Box 1897, Las Vegas, NV 89125 • (702) 922-6806

Housing Assistant Specialist II

Salary: \$35,942 - \$57,512 per annum (plus excellent benefits package). The Housing Authority of the City of Las Vegas is currently recruiting for the position of Housing Assistant Specialist II. The incumbent will be responsible for conducting certifications in accordance with HUD regulations, schedule appointments, answer telephones, prepare reports, logs, journals and conduct applicant interviews.

Experience: Two Years (2) of responsible program eligibility experience in a public housing agency, which serves low-income clientele.

Education: Education equivalent to the completion of high school supplemented by additional coursework in clerical or secretarial training, social work, or a related field. Training and certification in Public Housing Eligibility and Rent Calculation is required.

Note: The employee in this position will be working at North Las Vegas Housing Authority and continued employment is contingent upon receipt of funds.

Apply by: Thursday, June 26, 2008. An application packet can be picked up at 340 North 11th Street, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101 or visit our web site at www.haclv.org. If you live out of state, please contact Human Resources at 922-6806; TDD: (702) 386-0789 for an application and supplemental questionnaire. All applications must be received in the Human Resources Department by 5:00 p.m. on the closing date.
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