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AS U.N. HEARING ON U.S. RECORD ON RACE COMES TO AN END, DELEGATION OF U.S. NGOs SAY GOVERNMENT DELEGATION FAILED TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF STRUCTURAL RACISM

February 22, 2008, Geneva, Switzerland – As proceedings on the Bush Administration’s compliance of their obligations under International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), an international treaty ratified by the U.S. in 1994, came to a close today, the **US Human Rights Network (USHRN)** says the U.S. delegation failed completely to address issues of structural racism that persist in the United States today.

In response to questions posed by the U.N. Committee that monitors compliance under the treaty posed after the first day of proceedings that took place yesterday, representatives from federal agencies, including the Department of Justice and the State Department, provided a narrow interpretation of the government’s obligations, and unpersuasive rationalizations for the failure of the government to combat both direct and indirect forms of racism, as the treaty mandates.

Lisa Crooms, a co-author of the USHRN shadow report and Professor of Law at Howard University, stated, *“The government is speaking its own unique language regarding race and rights, which is at odd with the universal language of human rights. The government assumes no legal obligations to address racial discrimination or provide remedy for the victims, and instead justifies the disparate impacts that affect minorities in the U.S. today as the personal failures of the victims.”*

Over 120 activists and experts who traveled to Geneva to monitor the proceedings and hold the U.S. government accountable, including many associated with the 250-member USHRN, were disappointed, but not surprised, by the government’s outright denial that disparities that exist in the U.S. today are caused by racial inequalities, and assertion that the U.S. is meeting it’s duties under the treaty. The government’s view of discrimination is contrary to the experiences of the victims of racial discrimination, which were shared in testimonies to the Committee earlier this week.

In December 2007 the Network released an in-depth, independent “shadow report” that details how the Bush Administration has failed to comply with the treaty. Members of the U.N. Committee referenced the USHRN shadow report in many of their questions to the U.S. delegation on issues ranging from the ongoing hardships that people displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, who are mostly African American, continue to face, to the disenfranchisement and stripping of voting rights for racial minorities in a presidential election year.

In March, the U.N. Committee will issue their concluding observations of U.S. compliance under the treaty.

Ajamu Baraka, Executive Director of the USHRN added, *“We expect that the Committee will find in it’s concluding observations that the U.S. continues to evade its obligations to root out all forms of racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, public and private, from U.S. society.”*

To view a copy of the shadow report submitted by the US Human Rights Network, please visit:
http://www.ushrnetwork.org/cerd_shadow_2008

The **US Human Rights Network** was formed to promote US accountability to universal human rights standards by building linkages between organizations and individuals. The Network strives to build a human rights culture in the United States that puts those directly affected by human rights violations, with a special emphasis on grassroots organizations and social movements, in a central leadership role. The Network also works towards connecting the US human rights movement with the broader US social justice movement and human rights movements around the world. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.ushrnetwork.org>