

**Item 4: General Debate on Human Rights Situations Requiring Council
Attention**

**Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America
Delivered by Peter Mulrean Chargé d’Affaires**

Human Rights Council 25th Session Geneva, March 18, 2014

Mr. President,

The United States remains deeply concerned about deplorable human rights situations, especially in, but not limited to: **Syria, the DPRK, and Iran**. We will separately address these situations this session.

We highlight our ongoing concerns in these additional countries.

The **Cuban government** continued its practice of arbitrary detention, harassment, and violence to silence peaceful voices. We call for the immediate release of Alan Gross, who was detained for facilitating access to the Internet.

China has increased arrests, forced disappearances, and extralegal detentions of those who peacefully challenge official policies and actions, including Xu Zhiyong and Ilham Tohti. The government increased Internet controls, media censorship, and continued to limit religious freedom, particularly in Tibetan and Uighur areas. We note with profound sadness the recent death of Cao Shunli, an activist who urged independent civil society participation in China’s Universal Periodic Review process and was detained until recently.

The **Venezuelan government’s** arbitrary detention and excessive use of force and violence against protesters and journalists, lack of due process, and the shutdown of foreign media and Internet, endanger human rights. Venezuela should release protesters and protect and respect fundamental freedoms such as freedom of speech and peaceful assembly.

In the Darfur, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan states of **Sudan**, government forces deploy indiscriminate aerial bombardments and human rights violations and abuses continue to be committed by all parties to the conflict. The government’s excessive use of force on protestors in September 2013 resulted in hundreds of casualties.

In **Eritrea**, the government’s severe repression of fundamental freedoms has contributed to large numbers of people fleeing the country. The government should immediately grant access to the special rapporteur.

Belarus restricts freedoms of expression and assembly, and suppresses civil society and political participation. The government should grant access to the special rapporteur and release all political prisoners and restore their rights.

Lack of due process and respect for rule of law are ongoing problems in **Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**, which enable authorities to obstruct independent media reporting and to punish human rights defenders.

The United States also calls attention to recent developments in several places.

Russia adopted laws to suppress dissent, restrict the media, and stigmatize religious minorities and the LGBT community. Prosecutions of civil society and opposition members continue to raise concerns about rule of law and due process, including in the case of the Bolotnaya defendants. Torture, disappearances, and other serious violations continue in the North Caucasus. There are credible reports of Russian influence in the suppression of free expression on the Crimean peninsula.

Egypt severely restricted freedom of expression, assembly, and association through legal action and excessive force against peaceful demonstrators. Journalists continue to face physical risks, harassment, and retribution from governmental actors in **Iran**, non-governmental actors in **Yemen and Libya**, and from both in **Iraq**.

In **South Sudan**, forces associated with the government and with opposing armed groups have reportedly committed targeted ethnic killings as well as other serious human rights abuses and violations against civilians.

Thank you.