

## The Universal Periodic Review:

### An Opportunity to advance Economic Justice as a Human Rights Issue in the United States

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Economic justice is a human rights issue. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by United Nations and championed by Eleanor Roosevelt recognizes that every human being is entitled not only to work, but to just and favorable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, and to pay that ensures an existence worthy of human dignity, supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Human rights law also places obligations on the government to pursue policies to achieve full employment for all.

Over the next few months, economic justice groups have a unique opportunity to reshape the current discourse on economic policy to embrace bolder human rights concepts and to use the global platform of the United Nations to apply pressure on the Obama Administration to adopt bolder job creation programs and promote workers rights. This opportunity is presented because, for the first time ever, the U.S. government's human rights record was reviewed comprehensively by the United Nations in a process called the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and in March, the U.S. Government will be officially responding to the findings of the UPR.

Several economic justice groups engaged in the [preparations for the UPR](#) advocating for the human right to decent work, targeted job creation programs to eliminate the race and gender employment disparities, reform of macroeconomic policies, protections for migrant workers, and the right to collective bargaining. These are all universally accepted human rights concerns.

**We call on more organizations to join this effort.**

#### **What is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)?**

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a new human rights mechanism, which allows the United Nations Human Rights Council to periodically review all the Member States (countries) of the United Nations on their fulfillment of human rights obligations and commitments. The actual UPR review is a three-hour interactive dialogue between the country under review and the members of the United Nations. The UPR is based on the Charter of the United Nations, the UDHR, and all treaties and international humanitarian law that the country under review has agreed to. The United States was reviewed on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

#### **United States UPR Timeline**

- *February-April 2010* – U.S. State Department organizes [consultations with advocates in preparation for the UPR](#).
- *April 19, 2010* – [NGOs submitted reports to the UN](#) in preparation for the U.S. UPR. Several economic justice groups submitted reports during this process. The UN summarized the NGO reports into a 10-page document.
- *August 23, 2010* - The United States government submitted its [official report for the UPR](#). The U.S. government recognizes in its national report that it is not satisfied with the persistent racial disparities in unemployment and the lack of social protections for women at workplace.
- *September/October 2010* – NGOs lobby members of the UN to educate them on economic and other human rights concerns in the United States.
- *October 2010* – Countries submit [advance questions](#) to the United States for the UPR.
- *November 5, 2010* – The [U.S. government has its first UPR](#).
- *November 9, 2010* – The [outcome document](#) of the U.S. government accepted.
- ***March 2011*** – **The U.S. government will announce all recommendations that it accepts from the UPR.**

#### **How Economic Justice Advocates can participate in the UPR process today**

Please join us in writing and pressuring the Administration to accept the recommendations made to advance economic justice in the United States, and help us develop advocacy strategies between December 2010 and March 2011. Our aim is to take advantage of the UPR to push for stronger economic policies that protect and advance the human rights of workers particularly women of color. For more information, please contact Tatiana Bejar at [tbejar@urbanjustice.org](mailto:tbejar@urbanjustice.org) or call 646.602.5629.

#### **WHY THE UPR IS IMPORTANT**

**The UPR will help hold the U.S. government to the higher standards of accountability for workers.** Unlike other industrialized countries, the United States does not offer many protections for women in the workplace including paid family leave and child care supports. Economic and job creation policies have also failed to promote full employment or target groups in the most need. The UPR offers a platform to advance these demands.

**The UPR will help hold the U.S. government accountable to labor standards that it holds other countries to.** In order to get the ratification of the Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Peru in 2006, the U.S. Congress demanded that the Peruvian government commit to fulfill the higher labor standards in ILO conventions ratified by the Peruvian government. However, the United States has failed to ratify most ILO conventions and does not implement many of the standards recognized in these laws.