

January 26, 2007

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We write to you today to urge you to appoint a U.S. Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council to address the challenges and opportunities facing this important new body. As former U.S. Ambassadors to the former Commission on Human Rights with years of experience advancing U.S. values and interests within the UN system, we believe such an appointment will best ensure the necessary level of U.S. engagement on the Council.

While the Council's short tenure has yet to live up to our collective expectations, the U.S. has a longstanding tradition of protecting human rights defenders around the world. We are grateful to you for pledging in early 2006 to work constructively with the Council. Increased engagement by the United States, the EU, and allies in Africa, Asia and Latin America led to the Special Session on Sudan in December, which mandated a special investigative team to Darfur.

Much more, however, needs to be done. As the Council turns its attention to such important questions as re-examining special procedures, establishing a universal periodic review process and negotiating work agendas, it is critical that spoiler countries not succeed in derailing the reform process and shielding human rights abusers from scrutiny.

It is more important than ever that U.S. leadership guide this institution as the Council works to strengthen the international human rights standards in this century. There is a need for an experienced envoy at the UN to advance U.S. human rights priorities around the world. The Council's expanded work schedule, including three regular sessions and frequent special sessions, begs intensive engagement by the United States and other states committed to human rights. The reformed competitive election process, which will take place again this May, also demands vigorous involvement by the United States to ensure that states with good records on human rights are elected and the worst abusers defeated. The Ambassador should be a full-time year-round appointment based in Washington, but with responsibility to attend all Human Rights Council sessions and to travel to capitals between sessions to ensure our partners at the most senior levels are pulling their weight at the Council.

In sum, Madam Secretary, we believe that U.S. interests in human rights are best served if we engage constructively with the new UN Human Rights Council. Whether or not the United States decides to run for a seat on the Council this year, we urge you to appoint a permanent U.S. Ambassador to the Council as a demonstration of President Bush's commitment to be a world leader on human rights. Neither the United States nor

the millions of human rights victims and defenders around the world are served by U.S. disengagement. Now is the time to step up our traditional diplomatic commitment on human rights to ensure that the Council becomes the forum it was envisioned to be to protect and promote fundamental freedoms for decades to come. The appointment of a U.S. Ambassador to the Human Rights Council is an essential next step to realize these goals.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Geraldine A. Ferraro, US Ambassador to the Commission on Human Rights (1994-1996)

Ambassador Nancy Rubin, US Ambassador to the Commission on Human Rights (1997-2000)

Ambassador Richard S. Williamson, US Ambassador to the Commission on Human Rights (2004)

Cc: Elliot Abrams, Deputy National Security Advisor  
Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs  
Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs  
Michael Kozak, Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Organizations, National Security Council  
Mark Lagon, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization Affairs  
Barry Lowenkron, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor