



**Oral Statement by Jamil Dakwar, Human Rights Program Director, American Civil Liberties Union  
delivered to the UN Human Rights Council  
March 21, 2012**

Earlier today, the United States announced a newly created inter-agency process for implementing the UPR commitments made before this Council just over a year ago. The ACLU welcomes the US announcement of this UPR follow-up and implementation structure and considers it a step in the right direction.

Today, the ACLU laid out concrete steps the Obama administration should take in the next nine months, before the end of this presidential term, in order to live up to its human rights promises. We believe it is time for the administration take action on these commitments by ensuring the responsible government teams are held accountable for delivering measurable progress and implementing tangible reform.

Our released paper provides the government's newly announced implementation teams with substantive work plans towards achieving a broad range of human rights improvements, including issues related to racial discrimination, criminal justice, immigration, and national security.

These actions include:

- Ending DHS programs that lead to racial profiling through immigration enforcement (specifically: Secure Communities and agreements allowing local police to enforce immigration laws)
- Launching a study into the use of solitary confinement in federal prisons
- Giving U.N. Special Rapporteurs unimpeded access to Guantánamo Bay
- Providing accountability for torture, and preventing transfers to countries where prisoners may be tortured
- Examining the racial disparities in the application of the death penalty and mandatory minimum sentences

Such incremental reforms will not solve the nation's domestic human rights problems, but their adoption will put the country on the right track towards greater adherence.

On this international day against racial discrimination, we must remember that racial disparities in the U.S continue to persist, notwithstanding government efforts towards equality. Minorities and especially people of African descent continue to face intentional, structural, and *de facto* forms of discrimination which manifest in unequal access to quality education, housing, health services, employment, electoral disfranchisement, and discrimination in the criminal justice system, among many other issues. In this regard, the administration should formally establish an interagency working group on the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (*ICERD*) and establish a clear plan of action to implement fully the ICERD domestically and to ultimately improve the United States' compliance with the treaty.

If the United States wants to be seen as a human rights leader abroad then it needs to act like a leader at home. The administration has a limited window of opportunity to turn its human rights pledges into policy. It's time for the administration to put muscle behind its rhetoric and deliver the progress it recognizes that the American people deserve.

Thank you Madame President.