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United States is Called to Account for Failing to Meet Basic Human Needs
Groups to Testify at Upcoming UN Review of U.S. Human Rights Record

New York City, NY - In a report published in advance of a United Nations hearing on the U.S. human rights record, advocacy groups called the U.S. government to account for regularly washing its hands of any responsibility for making sure that its people are not ill-fed, ill-housed, and of ill health. This persistent denial of economic and social human rights in the United States hurts the entire U.S. population, the report shows. The United States has failed to fully respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights to education, health care, housing, work, and social security, partly because it consistently privileges private, profit-making interests over meeting people's fundamental needs. The critique comes on the eve of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a United Nations human rights monitoring mechanism, which will hold its first official examination of the U.S. human rights record on November 5 in Geneva, Switzerland. (1)

The 26-page report, "Toward Economic and Social Rights in the United States: From Market Competition to Public Goods (2)," cites overreliance on markets and government policies that benefit wealthier individuals and private corporations at the expense of ordinary people as key barriers to protecting economic and social rights in the United States. The report's authors call on the government to use public dollars for the benefit of the people, and to strengthen the public sector in order to meet everyone's needs, leaving no one behind.

Anja Rudiger, a Director at NESRI stated, "For decades the United States has made the mistake of relying on the market to meet people's needs, which has driven millions of people into poverty. We must stop treating the core services necessary for human well-being as market commodities and instead turn them into public goods." Cathy Albisa, NESRI's Executive Director, said. "The wholesale political attack on any commitment to public goods, such as publicly run schools and publicly financed health care – and most recently even fire departments - has engendered a chronic and corrosive human rights crisis for the United States."

The report is an updated version of a joint submission to the UN by eight nonprofit groups from across the United States. Over forty organizations endorsed the report. The report offers four case studies of groups fighting for human rights in their local communities:

- Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children fighting for the human right to education in New Orleans,
- The Vermont Workers' Center's statewide fight for the human right to health care,
- The Campaign to Restore National Housing Rights and the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign fighting for the human right to housing, and
- Baltimore's United Workers' fight for the human right to work with dignity.

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Representatives of two organizations that collaborated in submitting the report will travel as part of a national delegation to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland next week. The human rights activists, Deborah Burton of the Los Angeles Community Action Network (3) and Mary Gerisch of the Vermont Workers' Center and its *Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign*,(4) will offer testimony on the struggle for economic and social human rights in the United States. Two videos produced and submitted by NESRI and its allies will also be screened before UN representatives next week. In the first, Romeo Ramirez of The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a co-submitter of the report, documents farmworkers' human rights struggle in Florida. (5) In the second, Elizabeth Rosenthal, from Physicians for a National Health Program NY Metro, speaks on the human right to health care. (6)

The UPR process has offered an opportunity for emerging leaders in U.S. human rights activism to hold their government internationally accountable for the increasing impoverishment, exclusion, and criminalization of people unable to pay the price the private market commands for meeting their most fundamental human needs.

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Notes to editors

(1) The UPR is a new human rights monitoring mechanism of the United Nation's Human Rights Council. Every four years, the UPR assesses each country's adherence to its human rights obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various human rights treaties. The first Universal Periodic Review of the United States will take place on November 5 in Geneva. Visit the United Nations website for the Universal Periodic Review:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx>

(2) *Toward Economic and Social Rights in the United States: From Market Competition to Public Goods*, Joint Submission to the UN Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review of the United States of America, www.nesri.org/UPR_Report_NESRI.pdf

NESRI also released a statement on the U.S. government's report to the UN:

http://www.nesri.org/NESRI_Statement_On_Govt_UPR_Report.pdf

(3) To watch Steve Diaz of LACAN speak to the human right to housing, in a video testimony submitted to the Testify Project, visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/NetworkCAN#p/u/3/jSFL82AJqrY>

(4) The Vermont Workers' Center filmed a two-minute interview with Mary Gerisch about her upcoming trip to Geneva: <http://vermontworkerscenter.blip.tv/file/4304813/>. The Worker's Center also submitted a one-minute video about the denial of the human right to health care in the United States:

<http://www.vimeo.com/10229823>

(5) To watch Romeo Ramirez of Coalition of The Immokalee Workers tell his story, visit

<http://bit.ly/aeoPFO>

(6) To watch Elizabeth Rosenthal from Physicians for a National Health Program NY Metro speak on the human right to health care, visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/NESRIVIDEOS#p/u/6/OxFY7X2emxs>

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