Legislative Watch

Ryan Vogel
American University Washington College of Law

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The Human Rights Brief’s Legislative Watch reports on key U.S. legislation relevant to human rights and humanitarian law. This list is not meant to be comprehensive.

**S.RES.366, A resolution affirming the importance of increased international action and a national week of prayer for the Ugandan victims of Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army, and expressing the sense of the Senate that Sudan, Uganda, and the international community bring justice and humanitarian assistance to Northern Uganda and that February 2 through 9, 2006 should be designated as a National Week of Prayer and Reflection for the People of Uganda**

**Sponsor:** Senator James Inhofe (R – OK), 43 Co-sponsors

**Status:** Passed by Unanimous Consent in the Senate, without amendment, on February 26, 2006.

**Substance:** Senator Inhofe introduced this latest resolution regarding the human rights violations occurring in Uganda at the Hands of Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). It quickly gathered the support of co-sponsors and passed without opposition. The resolution expresses the sentiment of the United States Senate and urges the Sudanese government to continue to act against the LRA and assist Uganda in ending atrocities committed by the group. It also urges the Ugandan government to use all available resources to end LRA actions and prosecute its members. The Senate resolution calls on the United States and the international community to recognize the LRA atrocities and provide humanitarian aid. The resolution also designated February 2 – February 9, 2006, as a National Week of Prayer and Reflection for the people of Northern Uganda.

**S.RES.383, A resolution calling on the President to take immediate steps to help improve the security situation in Darfur, Sudan, with an emphasis on civilian protection**

**Sponsor:** Senator Joseph Biden (D – DE), 19 Co-sponsors

**Status:** Agreed to by Unanimous Consent by the Senate, without amendment, on March 2, 2006. The resolution was introduced on February 17, 2006, and discharged with unanimous approval by the Foreign Relations Committee on March 2, 2006.

**Substance:** The latest in a long line of proposed and passed legislation regarding the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, this resolution continues to express the strong sentiment of the United States Senate that action be taken to halt the atrocities in Darfur and enforce agreements aimed at restoring peace in the region. The resolution outlines a number of steps that Sudan, the United States, the African Union, and the international community should take in pursuit of these goals.

The horrific conditions and circumstances in Darfur and recognizing that agreements are not being met by the Sudanese regime, the resolution begins by strongly condemning the continued attacks on civilians in Darfur by the Sudanese government and sponsored militias, as well as the continued violation of ceasefire agreements. It commends the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) for its actions in monitoring the N’Djamena Ceasefire Agreement in Darfur and for its role in diminishing some of the violence in the region, while also acknowledging the difficult role the AMIS has been handed in the conflict. The resolution calls upon all parties to the N’Djamena Ceasefire to abide by the terms of the agreement and to engage in good-faith negotiations to end the conflict.

Turning to the international community, the resolution calls on the African Union to request assistance from the United Nations and NATO to strengthen its capacity to deter violence and instability until a peacekeeping force is fully deployed in Darfur. It also calls upon the United Nations Security Council to approve as soon as possible an adequate peacekeeping force for Darfur that is well trained and equipped.

Finally, the resolution urges President Bush to take immediate steps to help improve the security situation, including proposing a NATO-enforced no-fly zone in Darfur, deploying troops to support AMIS until a United Nations peacekeeping mission becomes operational, and requesting supplemental funding to support a NATO mission in Darfur. The resolution calls upon NATO allies, led by the United States, to support such a mission.

**S. 333/ H.R. 282, Iran Freedom Support Act**

**Senate Sponsor:** Senator Rick Santorum (R – PA), 46 Co-sponsors

**House Sponsor:** Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R – FL), 342 Co-sponsors

**Senate Status:** Referred to Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on February 9, 2005.

**House Status:** Referred to House Committee on International Relations on April 13, 2005.

**Substance:** The purpose of these parallel bills is to hold the current regime in Iran accountable for its threatening behavior and to assert, as the sentiment of Congress, support for transition to democracy in Iran.

This bill states that sanctions, controls, and regulations relating to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iran shall remain in effect until the President of the United States certifies that Iran has completely dismantled its WMD programs and agreed to non-proliferation accords.

The bill amends the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 by eliminating and weakening many of the actions against Libya while strengthening and adding to the sanctions and retaliatory actions against Iran in the event they continue with a nuclear weapons program.

Most notably, the bill authorizes the President to provide financial and political assistance to eligible foreign and domestic
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The Harvard Series on Health and Human Rights has compiled a collection of leading documents in the area of health, human rights, and professional ethics. The volume represents the first in a Harvard Series on Health and Human Rights and is similar to other compilations published by Columbia University’s Center for the Study of Human Rights. The publication provides a manageable and transportable copy of relevant documents relating to health and human rights, nearly all of which are also available electronically.

The compilation is divided into eight parts. Part I concerns health as it relates to medical professionals, including bioethics, research and experimentation, treatment of prisoners, and the rights of patients. Part II highlights the right to health within United Nations (UN) and regional human rights instruments. Part III presents documents that relate to physical integrity and the right to life free from torture, while Part IV addresses other key aspects of health, such as the right to adequate food, housing, education, and a general standard of living. The remaining four parts focus on human rights texts emanating from areas where standards have been established that directly impact health. These areas include vulnerable populations, such as women, children, the disabled, the elderly, and displaced persons; relevant health policy, such as infectious diseases, intellectual property, and occupational health and safety; biotechnology; and environmental protection. As Marks notes, these areas were selected “not [to] reflect a theoretical articulation of the relationship between health and human rights but rather [to] practically enumerate … the areas where the most relevant standard setting has occurred.”

Perhaps one of the collection’s greatest strengths is the complete reference information that is listed alongside each document, including the web address for a link to the full text. In this manner the book serves as an excellent first-stop reference by including the most relevant language pertaining to health while guiding the reader to the full text and context of the instrument. This format also enables a relatively slim volume to contain a range of different international documents and agreements related to an array of health-related topics, which makes it a valuable reference companion for many health and human rights practitioners and professionals in a range of specialty areas.

Although there are a few excerpts from regional human rights bodies, the volume is overwhelmingly dedicated to the publications and declarations of the UN. This is due in part to international law’s own limitations in advocating for health rights. Health and Human Rights nevertheless does not represent a tool for broadening the scope of protection afforded by human rights. Rather, the collection provides a solid and basic introduction to the past 60 years of UN human rights development in the area of health. Additionally, the volume does not indicate which countries are parties or signatories to the UN documents presented, so that additional research may be required depending upon the needs of the reader.

Despite these few limitations, Health and Human Rights succeeds in presenting health and human rights professionals with an accessible and basic first volume of key international human rights documents. As the field of health and human rights continues to expand and develop, the Harvard Series will certainly find its place within the reference library of practitioners, academics, and advocates alike.

Of additional interest to future readers of this collection is the FXB Center’s international journal, Health and Human Rights. The most recent volume of this journal focuses on emerging international issues in HIV/AIDS. For subscription information on the journal and for further information on the collection, contact the FXB Center at fxbcenter@igc.apc.org or at www.hsph.harvard.edu/fxbcenter.

Mihir Mankad, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law, wrote the review of Video for Change: A Guide for Advocacy and Activism for the Human Rights Brief.

Brooke Kirkland, a J.D. candidate at the University of Buffalo, wrote the review of Human Rights and Private Wrongs: Constructing Global Civil Society for the Human Rights Brief. She was a visiting student at the Washington College of Law in the fall of 2005.

Mark Vorkink, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law, wrote the review of Enforced Disappearances in International Human Rights for the Human Rights Brief.

Erin Scheick, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College, wrote the review of Health and Human Rights: Basic International Documents for the Human Rights Brief.

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individuals and groups that support democracy in Iran and that are opposed to the current regime. It also recommends that the President appoint a special assistant for Iranian matters, expand contact with democratic Iranian opposition groups, and designate at least one eligible democratic opposition organization to further the goals of the Act.

Both bills declare that U.S. policy should support Iranian self-determination over their form of government, as well as an internationally monitored referendum. The House bill goes a little further in affirming official U.S. declarations of support for democratic transition in Iran by denying access for Iranian officials to U.S. government buildings.

Ryan Vogel, a J.D. candidate at Washington College of Law, covers Legislative Watch for the Human Rights Brief.