



For Immediate Release:

October 4, 2011

Contact: Aimée Castenell, US Human Rights Network, (404) 588-9761

Lucy V. Vidal, Center for Women's Global Leadership, (732) 932-8782

Rights Groups Submit Joint Letter to Congress Demanding a Human Rights Perspective On Budget Decisions

As Congressional leaders returned to session Monday, they were met with a letter signed by 50 organizations requesting officials act to adopt a more equitable and redistributive tax system, adjust tax rates in proportion to income and wealth, tax financial transactions and eliminate loopholes. These organizations demand that any laws or policies Congress enacts, including those addressing the budget deficit, uphold basic human rights and dignity.

The letter comes as the so-called "Super-Committee" deliberates on how to reduce the deficit. In response to the rancor surrounding adoption of the debt deal, along with other policy debates that affect the lives of everyday people, this letter attempts to reason with a dysfunctional government that has ground to a standstill along ideological lines.

"A government must respect the human rights of all persons if it is to serve its people," says Kali Akuno, co-director of the US Human Rights Network, which coordinated the letter. "While the administration speaks of rights but does not act, Congress actively works against initiatives designed to protect those in need."

Radhika Balakrishnan, an economist who serves as Executive Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, elaborates, "How the government prioritizes its distribution of resources determines the wellbeing of those in a country. When the rich have tax breaks and loopholes while funding is cut for essential social programs, a society in crisis emerges. This perilous disconnect between current macroeconomic policies and the measures necessary to fulfill economic and social rights of all people living in the United States must be rectified immediately."

"The drastic spending cuts promoted in Washington fly in the face of our government's obligation to serve the people, protect our rights and meet our fundamental needs," says Anja Rudiger of the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative. "We call on Congress to raise the necessary revenue to ensure that everyone in our country has access to good jobs, housing, health care, education and other essential public goods."

The letter highlights that the human rights record of the United States, and its reputation as a democracy that promises an adequate standard of living for all, is increasingly eroded by growing poverty, record joblessness, a severe housing crisis, and unprecedented levels of inequality. The signatories demand that Congress stop this erosion and raise much needed revenue to ensure people's basic human rights.