

Before UN and CGI Assemblies...

President Obama Addresses Issues of Violence, Trafficking

Appearing before two assemblies of world leaders in New York on September 25, President Obama addressed issues of particular concern to organizations and individuals engaged in refugee and humanitarian causes, urging greater efforts to stem what he called the “mindless violence” erupting recently in the Middle East and the “modern slavery” involved in human trafficking.

Before the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Obama reaffirmed America’s commitment to freedom of speech even as he condemned the violent protests sparked by an anti-Islamic video produced by an American citizen and aired on Arabic broadcast and social media outlets.

In a later appearance at the Clinton Global Initiative, the President described how human trafficking debases common humanity, rips apart social fabrics, distorts markets, endangers public health and fuels violence and organized crime.



President Barack Obama addresses UN General Assembly.
UN Photo/JC Mcllwaine

“I do not use that word, ‘slavery’ lightly, Obama said. “It evokes obviously one of the most painful chapters in our nation’s history. But around the world, there’s no denying the awful reality. When a man, desperate for work, finds himself in a factory or on a fishing boat or in a field, working, toiling, for little or no pay, and beaten if he tries to escape—that

is slavery. When a woman is locked in a sweatshop, or trapped in a home as a domestic servant, alone and abused and incapable of leaving—that’s slavery.

When a little boy is kidnapped, turned into a child soldier, forced to kill or be killed—that’s slavery. When a little girl is sold by her impoverished family—girls my daughters’ age—runs away from home, or is lured by the false promises of a better life, and then imprisoned in a brothel and tortured if she resists—that’s slavery. It is barbaric, and it is evil, and it has no place in a civilized world.”

Calling the anti-Islamic video “crude and disgusting,” President Obama explained to the General Assembly how such hateful comment is allowed by the freedom of speech clause in the US constitution.

“There are no words that excuse the killing of innocents. There is no video that justifies an attack on an Embassy.

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Liberian President Expresses Gratitude for UN’s Decade of Support

Ten years after the end of Liberia’s brutal civil war, the country has made tremendous progress on the path to lasting peace and stability, its President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, told the UN General Assembly on September 26, while adding that serious challenges remain.

“Liberia is no longer a place of conflict, war and deprivation. We are no longer the country our citizens fled, our international partners pitied and our neighbors feared,” she told the Assembly’s high-level General Debate, thanking the UN for being “a very committed and effective partner” with her country as it emerged from conflict and embarked on the path to peace, security and development. “We owe the Organization much

gratitude for preserving an enabling environment for peace-building and state-building.”

The UN has maintained a peacekeeping force in Liberia since 2003 to bolster a ceasefire agreement ending a decade of



Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
UN Photo by Jennifer S. Altman

war that killed nearly 150,000 people, mostly civilians. The mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) includes helping to restore the rule of law and democratic processes, as well as facilitating humanitarian assistance.

The President highlighted some of the gains made in recent years which have resulted in an average annual growth of over six per cent; the mobilization of over \$16 billion in direct foreign investment; an expanded fiscal space through unprecedented debt cancellation, infrastructure reconstruction and institutional rebuilding.

“More importantly, we have earned our rightful place as a country of hope

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In My Opinion...

“Speaking Truth to Power”

Sometimes a phrase composed to convey one idea is so overused that it becomes a cliché, embracing broader meanings that may still have profound significance. Such a phrase is “speaking truth to power.” It is believed to have originally been the title of a pamphlet published in 1954 by the American Friends Service Committee calling for a new approach to the MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) defense policy spawned by the Cold War arms race. The phrase has since been used most commonly to describe the courage of a presumably weak voice addressing stronger persons or institutions. (Anita Hill used it as the title of her book about charges of sexual harassment against Clarence Thomas during his Supreme Court confirmation hearings in 1991.) The voice, of course, need not be weak, as was demonstrated by President Barack Obama in his recent remarks to the United Nations and the Clinton Global Initiative.



Tsehaye Teferra, Ph.D.
President, ECDC

To an audience that included representatives of some nations that either encourage or tolerate hate and violence against those of different faiths, cultures and customs, he reminded delegates that the essential mission of the United Nations is to encourage a peaceful settlement of disputes. Explaining why America’s commitment to freedom of speech and expression will not allow the type of censorship practiced by “dictators who cling to power,” he quoted Nelson Mandela’s comment: “To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

In that address—and in his remarks to the CGI audience—President Obama described how advances in communications technologies are impacting formerly closed societies—in both positive and negative ways. The “Arab Spring” movement toward democracy was fueled in great measure by expanded access to the internet and cell phones, he explained, as was the assault on embassies and consulates attributed to the anti-Muslim video that had gone largely unnoticed until it was posted on Arab websites.

“At a time when anyone with a cell phone can spread offensive views around the world with the click of a button,” the President said, “the notion that we can control the flow of information is obsolete.”

It is somewhat ironic that those who took to the streets in violent outrage were using their newly-gained freedom of expression and new communications technologies to demand that the United States stifle the offensive video. That’s what they have learned to expect from their own governments, remaining unaware of Mandela’s wisdom and democracy’s demands.

“True democracy demands that citizens cannot be thrown in jail because of what they believe, and that businesses can be opened without paying a bribe,” Obama said. “It depends on the freedom of citizens to speak their minds and assemble without fear, and on the rule of law and due process that guarantees the rights of all people. In other words, true democracy—real freedom—is hard work.”

It will take much more work and vastly improved education—for girls and boys, women and men—for the seeds of democracy being planted around the world to take root and flower into a new political order. In that process, let us hope that those in positions of power will heed Obama’s counsel and remember the wisdom expressed by another American president who spoke truth to power.

It was President Lyndon Johnson who more appropriately echoed the Quaker phrase used as the title of this column when he said: “Truth wears no uniform and bears no flag. But it is the most loyal all that freedom knows.”

President Obama Urges World Leaders to Respect Freedom of Expression

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There is no slander that provides an excuse for people to burn a restaurant in Lebanon, or destroy a school in Tunis, or cause death and destruction in Pakistan,” he added, referring to the attacks that killed the American Ambassador in Libya and caused deaths elsewhere.

“Americans have fought and died around the globe to protect the right of all people to express their views, even views that we profoundly disagree with. We do not do so because we support hateful speech, but because our founders understood that without such protections, the capacity of each individual to express their own views and practice their own faith may be threatened. We do so because in a diverse society, efforts to restrict speech can quickly become a tool to silence critics and oppress minorities. We do so because given the power of faith in our lives, and the passion that religious differences can inflame, the strongest weapon against hateful speech is not repression; it is more speech—the voices of tolerance that rally against bigotry and blasphemy, and lift up the values of understanding and mutual respect.”

Liberian President...

[Continued from page 1]

and opportunity,” she stated. “The processes of change which have started will continue and will not stop until the country is placed on an irreversible path of sustained peace, growth and development.”

At the same time, President Johnson-Sirleaf said the Government is keenly aware of the challenges to be faced over the next three years as UN peacekeeping forces are gradually withdrawn from Liberia. Earlier this month, the Security Council extended UNMIL’s mandate for another year, reducing its military strength in three phases and authorizing the Secretary-General to implement the first phase of that reduction—1,900 personnel—between October 2012 and September 2013.

Naturalization Events Welcome New Citizens

The Department of Homeland Security welcomed more than 32,000 new citizens during 158 naturalization ceremonies from September 14-22 in recognition of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, observed annually on September 17 in remembrance of the signing of the Constitution in 1787.

Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano participated in a special naturalization ceremony at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas officiated a children's ceremony in Los Angeles.

"There is no better time than Constitution Week to highlight the rights, responsibilities and importance of U.S. citizenship, and recognize the many contributions immigrants have made to this great nation," said Secretary Napolitano. "These naturalization ceremonies celebrate our longstanding tradition of welcoming immigrants who come here from across the world, to seek a better life for themselves and their families, and to contribute to our country."

ACF Partnership Fund To Support Families

To help struggling families stay together and access stable housing and other needed services, the Administration for Children and Families announced in mid-September that it is teaming up with four national foundations to fund a \$25 million grant to five organizations nationwide.

The five grantees are Kids in Distress (Wilton Manors, Fla.), Community Alliance for the Homeless (Memphis, Tenn.), Four Oaks Family and Children's Services (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), the San Francisco Human Services Agency, and the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

ACF will provide \$1 million per year to each of the five grantees for five years (\$25 million total) to demonstrate the effectiveness and potential cost-savings of projects incorporating stable housing and comprehensive services that focus on safety, positive family functioning, and child well-being. Funding for the following four years will be dependent on the availability of funds and grantees

At Annual National Consultation...

PRM Assistant Secretary Anne C. Richard Anticipates Increase in Refugee Arrivals

As a result of recent improvements in security clearance systems, the number of refugees processed for resettlement in the United States is expected to increase next year, according to remarks by PRM Assistant Secretary Anne C. Richard at the annual National Consultation in mid-September.

"We are working with UNHCR on a large-scale resettlement program for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, some of whom may begin to arrive at the end of fiscal year 2013," she said, also noting that PRM is encouraging other countries to offer safe havens to refugees. "Twenty-five countries now resettle refugees, and we are working with both Uruguay and Bulgaria to provide technical advice to strengthen their new resettlement programs."

Appointed to her post in April, Richard is a former vice-president of government relations and advocacy for the In-

ternational Rescue Committee and has extensive experience in diplomatic and management assignments. Before her appointment, she was a non-resident Fellow of the Center for Transatlantic Re-

lations at Johns Hopkins University/SAIS and a board member of the Henry L. Stimson Center; Director of the Secretary's Office of Resources, Plans and Policy at the State Department; Deputy Chief Financial Officer of the Peace Corps; and Budget Examiner at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. She first joined the U.S. government in 1984 as a Presidential Management Intern.

Among recent improvements in the refugee resettlement program, Richard noted the doubling the funds provided to partner agencies to help with initial reception and placement services; providing a guaranteed minimum level of funding allowing agencies to better manage resources and sustain quality service deliveries even if there is a shortfall in anticipated arrivals or unavoidable delays; providing more medical and case information in advance of a refugee's arrival; and increasing consultation with partner agencies and local communities.



Assistant Secretary
Anne C. Richard

meeting certain benchmarks.

Additionally, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, and Edna McConnell Clark Foundation will provide a combined total of at least \$10 million over the next five years for technical assistance and rigorous national evaluations of the supportive housing plan's effectiveness.

USCIS Announces Grants for Naturalization Aid

As part of its celebration of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, USCIS announced in mid-September the award of approximately \$5 million in grants to 31 organizations from 21 states and the District of Columbia designed to promote immigrant civic integration and prepare permanent residents for citizenship.

Since the program began in October 2009, it has helped more than 38,000 permanent residents prepare for citizenship and the new grants to be issued through September 30, 2014 are expected to help an additional 26,000 people.

The grants are awarded through a competitive funding opportunity to organizations that will provide both citizenship instruction to prepare permanent residents for the civics and English components of the naturalization test, and naturalization application services within the scope of the authorized practice of immigration law.

Former Somali Refugee Honored With 2012 Nansen Award

Hawa Aden Mohamed, a former Somali refugee who returned to her war-torn homeland in 1995 to assist other refugees and work for peace and development, has been named winner of UNHCR's annual Nansen Refugee Award.

She is the founder and director of the Galkayo Education Centre for Peace and Development (GECPD) in Puntland, north-eastern Somalia and is honored "for her exceptional, tireless and inspiring humanitarian work," according to a UNHCR statement. It noted particularly her efforts of behalf of displaced women and girls grappling with the trauma of marginalization, abuse and sexual violence, including rape.

"When Hawa Aden Mohamed rescues a displaced girl, a life is turned around," said António Guterres. "we are saluting her for her work to save, nurture and educate hundreds of women and girls, many victims of the worst kind of violence."

Commonly referred to as "Mama Hawa" in the village of Galkayo, the Nansen laureate says her work is essentially motivated by her belief that proper education lies at the root of everything, es-

pecially for girls.

"I think not having education is a kind of disease," said Mama Hawa. "Without education, you are unaware of so many things... Without education you

their own, and themselves influence their future and their own role in Somali society.

"It's time for the culture to change," she said. "We need to keep the good and let go of the bad. And the good is to empower the girl."

Mama Hawa is also a vocal campaigner for women's rights, particularly opposing female genital mutilation (FGM). Her sister died from an infection after she was circumcised at about the age of seven.

Established in 1954, the Nansen Refugee Award promotes global interest in refugees and keeps alive the spirit of Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nation's first High Commissioner for Refugees. It has since been awarded to 68 individuals, groups or organizations.

UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie congratulated the honoree for changing the lives of so many people, giv-

ing them the opportunity to become teachers and leaders.

"Despite more than two decades of conflict, Madam Hawa has proven that, even in the most difficult circumstances, every child can and should have a chance to learn," Jolie said. "Her courage and commitment serve as a beacon to all humanitarians striving to assist and protect refugees worldwide."



"Mama Hawa" Mohammed addresses a tailoring class at the education center she established in Galkayo, Somalia. The seamstresses make "dignity kits" for displaced women and girls. UNHCR Photo/

do not exist much—physically yes, but mentally and emotionally, you do not exist."

The center she founded and continues to manage provides secondary education as well as vocational training, so that women and girls can make a living on

FY 2011 African Refugee Admissions

As of August 31, 2012 • Ceiling for FY 2012 is 12,000

Country of Origin	Refugees	Country of Origin	Refugees
Burundi	168	Niger	4
Cameroon	2	Nigeria	2
Central African Republic	136	Rwanda	145
Chad	12	Senegal	5
Congo	102	Sierra Leone	1
Dem. Rep. Congo	1,589	Somalia	4,184
Eritrea	1,137	South Africa	1
Ethiopia	559	Sudan	967
Gabon	1	Tanzania	2
Gambia	2	Togo	26
Ivory Coast	33	Uganda	18
Kenya	13	Zimbabwe	1
Liberia	66	TOTAL	9,167

Source: U.S. Department of State, PRM

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