

Human rights in a globalized world



By Margretha Nónklett & Unn Poulsen, Amnesty International Faroe Islands Section.

It is our pleasure to welcome Mr. Bill Clinton and Mr. Hans Blix to the Faroe Islands to speak about globalization.

In an age of globalization, marred by division and discord, the need for universal values becomes even more needed than before.

Nearly sixty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted recognizing the need for universal values. Here the world leaders gathered and agreed on the fundamental principles that human rights are universal and indivisible -- that all human rights should be enjoyed by all people.

Today, nearly sixty years later there do, however, seem to be

different opinions about some of the most fundamental rights in the Declaration, namely the "right to life, liberty and security" (article 3).

People around the world still disagree about whether it is legitimate to take the lives of those who have themselves taken life. To Amnesty International, the death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. It violates the right to life. It is irrevocable and can be inflicted on the innocent. It has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments.

Amnesty International seeks to play a major role in the globalization of the fight for a death penalty-free world. Progress has been dramatic. In 1977 only 16 countries had abolished the death penalty for all crimes. Today around 133 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. On average, in the past decade more than three countries a year have abolished the death penalty for all crimes.

Despite this trend some nations continue to execute their citizens. During 2006, at least 1,591 people were executed in 25 countries. At least 3,861 people were sentenced to death in 55 countries. 91 per cent of all known executions took place in six countries: China, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan and the USA.

53 prisoners were executed in



the USA in 2006, bringing to 1,057 the total number executed

since the use of the death penalty was resumed in 1977.

Scientific studies have consistently failed to find convincing evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments and as long as the death penalty is maintained, the risk of executing the innocent can never be eliminated. Since 1973, 123 US prisoners have been released from death row after evidence emerged of their innocence of the crimes for which they were sentenced to death.

So if the death penalty doesn't protect the citizens, risks innocent lives and is applied unfairly, why retain it?

Amnesty International believes that the world is moving towards being execution-free. The question is when this will be achieved and how many people will have to die before then?

Amnesty International Faroe Islands Section would like to take this great opportunity to urge Mr. Bill Clinton to bring back a message to Mrs. Clinton, who is running for President of the United States. A strong message that there is a need for change – a need for universal values and respect for human rights.

Sources:

www.amnestyusa.org

www.amnesty.org

Stop the State Killing.

Amnesty International. AI

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American Realities and the Traveling President



By Bjarni í Liðá

About to begin a new chapter of my life in their country, I was utterly convinced that very few Americans were normal according to the standards on which I usually judge people. In addition, the country simply seemed too big to grasp fully, mysterious in some ways, and maybe even a little dangerous. The usual reaction I get when talking to people at home about studying in the U.S. is something like this: "I don't think I could live there, it's just too far away, and isn't the crime rate pretty high over there? Oh, but it's great that you're doing it! Living

the American Dream!"

In the reality of what is the United States, I have not yet encountered this dream. And I doubt if I really believe in its existence. It's simply too intangible an idea. To me, though the country still does seem vast, it did not take long for it to become completely demystified. This is not a dream, but real life – and I can't do anything but love it. Rather than being intimidating, the size of the country is what makes it so full of opportunities for a person to shape life as he or she pleases. And coming in as an outsider is no barrier to fitting in and utilizing what the country has to offer. It is made easy by the astonishing openness that the people has been conditioned into by their heritage as 'the great melting pot' (or salad bowl, as I think is more fitting).

However much I like the U.S., it does have its less positive sides. Some stereotypes about its citizens are true to a great extent. Americans know America. Period. I am left shocked and speechless every time, but it still happens regularly that I get asked the question, "So is your country, like, uhm, a democracy?" This

usually happens after I tell people about the Faroese tax system, from which people infer we are some kind of communist satellite state. And, call me arrogant, but it does seem like an unreasonably large proportion of Americans outside of Hollywood dress as if they are completely oblivious to the concept of fashion.

But regardless of Americans' knowledge of international relations and fashion beyond the mid-1990s, the people whose lives have crossed mine (the majority of whom have been college students) all seem to have a great ability to actually get something of worth out of their existence. In short, they use the opportunities they have, they realize that living is more than subsisting, and thus they shape their lives in accordance with who they are into microcosms, which they can truly cherish.

So, while the former president (and perhaps future 'first man') and I inhabit each others' homes for a short time, how should this distinguished visitor be viewed, being of the peculiar American 'race'? To a greater degree than most, this man has shaped his life in accordance

with the greatness with his character. While not pronouncing him super-human, as his slip up has become much better known than his first-rate public policies and most everything else he has done, there is something very sympathetic, yet brilliant about the man. Even now, when the spotlight is on his wife, he still stands firmly and comfortably behind her, seemingly not in need of media attention personally. In this position, his humanness becomes more evident than when people saw him as the image of the peak of earthly power. Given this, I suggest Bill Clinton be taken at more than just face value as a great political figure. Much can be gleaned from a man whose self-awareness has allowed him to take on the world and come out on top. Now, he has even come as far as the Faroe Islands.

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Drinks too much coffee, plays too much sand volleyball, and listens to music.