

3-2-2001

Trends. Politically Incorrect on Human Rights: The 2000 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

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Recommended Citation

Editor (2001) "Trends. Politically Incorrect on Human Rights: The 2000 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 8 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol10/iss8/3>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Trends. Politically Incorrect on Human Rights: The 2000 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

Author: Editor

Volume: 10

Issue: 8

Date: 2001-03-02

Keywords: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Human Rights, US Department of State

The United States (US) Department of State publicly released the 2000 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on February 26, 2001. As usual, it provides information as both fact and opinion on how human rights are upheld and violated in almost all countries and territories throughout the world. And as usual it provides two types of politically incorrect controversies.

First, there is the controversy over what has been left unsaid and how what has been said has been said. In other words, is the report inappropriately selective in terms of what has been included and excluded? And are the intrapsychic and behavioral phenomena--as well as various hypothetical constructs that are treated as ontologically valid--appropriately labeled as exemplars of human rights or their antithesis. The specific Issues from this controversy include whether the US Government is too tough or not tough enough on allies, neutrals, and adversaries.

Second, there is the controversy over what to do about what allegedly is occurring. Does one prevent or attenuate human rights violations--or does one nurture and increase human rights--through engagement or isolation or some combination of the two? Much less often, but more politically incorrect, is the notion raised that human rights and their violation cannot be conditioned in any predictable fashion.

As often and politically incorrect as the predictability notion is the notion that USG efforts in the human rights realm are as much an expression of strategic interest, playing to various political constituencies, and/or psychodynamic acting out as of ethical and moral considerations. Even less often expressed is criticism of the substance and inviolability and inalienability of human rights. On what does the privileged status of human rights rest? Should human rights have such status? Should human rights as construct denote and connote vastly different meanings?

Another report has come and will soon be gone from its moments in the limelight. Could it be that the construct of human rights is itself an exemplar of existential abuse? (See 2000 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. United States Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000>; Jones, D. (2000). Group nepotism and human kinship. *Current Anthropology*, 41, 779-809; Maguire, D. C. (2000). "Re-conceptualizing the role of men in the post-Cairo era": Commentary. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 2, 343-346; Rogers, J. D., & Spencer, J. (1998). Sri Lanka: Political violence and ethnic conflict. *American Psychologist*, 53, 771-777; Sanger, D.E. (February 27, 2001). U.S. finds rights abuses in China, Colombia, and Israel. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Statman, D. (2000). Humiliation, dignity and self-respect. *Philosophical Psychology*, 13, 523-540.) (Keywords: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Human Rights, US Department of State.)