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The Big Joke: The United Nations and Human Rights in Cuba

http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10290

By Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow CATO Institute

Reviewed by J. Edgar Williams

In mid-June, this article by Doug Bandow appeared on both the CATO Institute and *American Spectator* online sites. Its author, who holds a law degree from Stanford and previously served as a Special Assistant to President Reagan, is also a columnist for AntiWar.com. He writes that it's a "big joke" for "United Nations" and "human rights" to appear in the same sentence – and then provides evidence to support his claim.

Charging that the United Nations has a terrible record on human rights, he points to the former UN Commission on Human Rights, which became a serious embarrassment to the international body because it was often dominated by governments that were among the worst abusers of human rights. Not only that, the Commission often whitewashed the records of clearly oppressive governments. It was replaced in 2006 by the Human Rights Council, which – far from improving the UN human rights record – has made it worse.

Bandow uses Cuba, a member of the Council, as a prime example of the new Council's failure to tell the truth let alone protect human rights. First quoting from the State Department's assessment of Cuba's many ongoing human rights abuses, he then points to a UN press release praising Cuba's "progress...in the protection and promotion of human rights." This release also falsely describes the U.S. embargo of Cuba as a "blockade" and attributes much of the blame for Cuba's ills to the United States. Based upon the Council's whitewashing of Cuba's many and long-standing violations of human rights, Bandow concludes that "the Human Rights Council is not a serious body."

In Bandow's view, the UN Council on Human Rights is not promoting human rights but providing cover for oppressors and persecutors, such as Castro's Cuba. The Bush administration stayed out of the new Council, but the Obama administration announced its decision to join it. In view of the Council's record, Bandow thinks that the United States and other serious countries should get out. "The problem is not Cuba. It is the UN."★



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