



UN “Human Rights” Bureaucrats Demand Global “Law” for Detroit

By Alex Newman
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Sensing an opportunity to boost their own image and illegitimate power, bureaucrats from the dictator-dominated United Nations “Human Rights” apparatus are attacking authorities in Detroit for threatening to cut off water services on seriously delinquent accounts — mostly to unoccupied buildings, according to authorities. In response, the global outfit is making wild demands while seeking to impose what it refers to as “international law” on the American people.

The widely ridiculed UN, dominated by Third World despots of various varieties who universally reject the notion of real rights as understood by Americans and the West, claimed that water services are a “human right.” As such, the world outfit’s self-styled “experts” on “human rights” demanded that authorities in Detroit continue offering services even to those who do not pay for them. If officials refuse, the UN claims city authorities’ actions would be a violation of what it styles global “law.”

The outlandish remarks from UN bureaucrats represent the acceleration of several troubling trends observed in recent years. Among them is the fact that the global outfit — often laughed off in America as an incompetent and corrupt “dictators club” — is increasingly seeking to impose its radical policy demands on the United States, American state governments, and even on local communities.

In recent years, for example, the would-be planetary government has openly and explicitly attacked the U.S. Constitution, state sovereignty, gun rights, parental rights, the American justice system, self-defense rights, the decisions of voters, and much more. The dangerous campaign to enforce the UN’s extremist vision on the free and independent people of America is gaining steam, too, with full collaboration from the rabidly pro-UN Obama administration.

Separately, the latest UN attack on American policies comes amid a concerted global campaign to redefine the very notion of rights. In the United States, as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution make crystal clear, individual rights come

from God and cannot be legitimately infringed upon by government. In fact, the Founders pointed out that whole purpose of government is to protect unalienable rights.

Under the UN's vision, however, revocable privileges are granted by all-powerful governments. In its "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," the UN even states its abhorrent position that what it inaccurately refers to as "rights" are "granted" by governments, not the Creator. The global entity also claims "rights" can be limited "by law," and that no rights may be "exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations."

Rather than freedom from coercion — free speech, freedom of the press, the right to keep and bear arms, the right to be secure from unreasonable searches, and more — the UN admittedly views rights in totalitarian terms, such as the "right" to the fruits of others' labor. Like communist and socialist dictators worldwide, the UN justifies its existence partly based on the dangerous notion that taxpayer-funded goods and services can be considered "rights" to be enforced by the coercive power of government.

The difference between the visions, of course, is crucial: Real rights are freedom *from* government coercion; UN "rights" *require* government coercion. For more evidence of the UN's view of "human rights," simply consider the brutal assortment of communist, socialist, Islamist, and mass-murdering tyrants on the UN "Human Rights Council." Late last year, even the regimes ruling China, Cuba, Vietnam, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Russia were appointed to the council.

The whole "human rights" brouhaha against Detroit began when fringe activists in Michigan and Canada "reported" the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department to the UN. Last week, the far-left Council of Canadians' Blue Planet Project, collaborating with local radicals, filed a "submission" with what the UN calls its "Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation."

According to the complaint, the bankrupt Big Government ruling over the ruins of Detroit has been cutting off water to accounts that are overdue by more than two months. There were more than a few false claims in the report, but the UN, which has exactly zero legitimate authority to meddle in America's domestic affairs, decided to intervene anyway — in as loud a manner as possible.

In all, three self-styled UN "human rights experts" began issuing ludicrous demands. "Disconnection of water services because of failure to pay due to lack of means constitutes a violation of the human right to water and other international human rights," the motley gaggle of UN "experts" complained to the world in a press release following various media interviews.

According to the UN screed, UN "human rights law" makes it the U.S. government's "obligation" to "provide urgent measures, including financial assistance," to ensure access to goods and services that the dictators' club views as rights. "The households which suffered unjustified disconnections must be immediately reconnected," the experts demanded in their public statement.

The collection of UN “human rights” bureaucrats includes “experts” focused on “water and sanitation,” “adequate housing,” and “extreme poverty.” Catarina de Albuquerque, the UN “Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation,” was the most outspoken, even giving interviews with major media outlets claiming that the UN’s “international law” must govern the decisions of local governments in the United States.

“Disconnections due to non-payment are only permissible if it can be shown that the resident is able to pay but is not paying,” Albuquerque said in a UN press release, apparently under the misguided impression that her comical title confers authority over local government decisions in the United States. “In other words, when there is genuine inability to pay, human rights simply forbids disconnections.”

Albuquerque also pointed to her previous demands made after a 2011 “country mission” to the United States. After that visit, she brazenly demanded that the U.S. government violate the Constitution that created it by assuming vast new powers not delegated to it by the people or the states. In her latest statement, she also renewed her calls for the “federal Government” to take unconstitutional “action.”

“I encouraged the US Government to adopt a federal minimum standard on affordability for water and sanitation and a standard to provide protection against disconnections for vulnerable groups and people living in poverty,” she said, displaying either stunning hostility to, or dangerous ignorance of, America’s constitutional system of federalism and limited government. “I also urged the Government to ensure due process guarantees in relation to water disconnection.”

Of course, under America’s system of self-government, Washington, D.C., has no authority to adopt such policies. If the people of any state or community view such measures as a government responsibility, the appropriate venue to pursue them would be at the state legislature, county commission, or city council. As always, though, UN “experts” consistently demand that the federal government violate the Constitution to impose policies sought by the planetary outfit.

Another UN “human rights” apparatchik, Leilani Farha, who styles herself the UN “expert on the right to adequate housing,” even suggested — without evidence — that racism might be at work in Detroit. “If these water disconnections disproportionately affect African Americans they may be discriminatory, in violation of treaties the US has ratified,” she claimed in the press release.

In a statement, however, Water and Sewer authorities in Detroit debunked many of the allegations made by radical activists and the UN’s “experts” about the situation in the city. Of those who receive shut-off notices, only a small percentage of households actually have their water cut off, city officials said. Most of the properties losing water, it added, are “vacant structures, not occupied homes.”

“The DWSD is working closely with its customers in Detroit who are delinquent in their payments to prevent avoidable water shut offs,” it said. “The department currently has

more than 17,000 Detroit customers enrolled into a successful payment plan program that is designed to fit each customer's financial situation and ability to pay. Next month, the DWSD also plans to launch a new financial assistance program for the city's indigent population."

Water department spokeswoman Curtrise Garner was quoted in media reports saying water bills need to be paid, noting that oftentimes, once services are shut off, "the next day they are in paying the bill in full." A study by the Cato Institute, meanwhile, revealed that state and federal welfare benefits in Michigan pay \$28,872 per year — making claims that water bills are unaffordable or that more welfare is required sound rather implausible, if not ridiculous.

The UN and its oftentimes barbaric member regimes are hardly known for their honesty or commitment to actual human rights. If it is true that poor people in Detroit are suffering from water cut-offs due to poverty, though, that is an issue for Americans and especially the local community. Churches, charities, neighbors, families, city officials, and locals must take responsibility — certainly not the UN or the Obama administration.

Rather than funding dictator-appointed "human rights" experts to attack the United States and its system of government while seeking to re-define the very concept of rights, the U.S. government should withdraw from the disgraced global body entirely. A bill already introduced in Congress by Rep. Paul Broun (R-Ga.) and eight co-sponsors, H.R. 75, the American Sovereignty Restoration Act, would do exactly that. At the very least, lawmakers in the GOP-controlled House should cut all funding to the outfit on the road to a full withdrawal.