

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We commend your commitment to strengthening human rights and democracy around the world. In light of that commitment, and because we also share your view that the United States should lead by the power of example, we write to urge your Administration to establish a presidential commission to study the creation of a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in the United States.

The United States has a long tradition of supporting universal human rights abroad, reflected in U.S. leadership in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ratification of several key international human rights treaties. But we have often neglected to translate our international commitments into domestic law and policy. In your remarks at the dedication of the Dodd Center for Human Rights in 2021, you [stated](#) that the United States must demonstrate that its “commitment to human rights begins at home.” In the aftermath of the January 6, 2021 attack on our democracy, and in the face of unrelenting efforts to roll back fundamental rights, including voting rights and the rights to privacy and bodily autonomy, we fully agree.

On March 29 and 30, the United States will co-host the second Summit for Democracy. All states participating in the Summit are encouraged to highlight specific initiatives that reflect their commitment to strengthening human rights and democracy domestically and through multilateral cooperation. One such commitment your administration could make would be to announce the establishment of a presidential commission to study the creation of a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in the United States.

By initiating the process of establishing an NHRI, the U.S. would clearly communicate its willingness to adopt a widely recognized global best practice that can facilitate compliance with human rights obligations. Democracies around the world, including many of the United States’ closest allies and partners, have [established national institutions](#) that promote human rights domestically, monitor implementation of their international human rights commitments and engage with international human rights bodies. Some national human rights institutions are designed to advise and inform the legislative, judicial, and executive branches on human rights standards and to provide public education on human rights. Others have a mandate to investigate alleged human rights violations or to resolve individual claims. Whatever model may be appropriate, an NHRI in the United States can be expected to strengthen popular knowledge and understanding of human rights and help to further improve compliance with our human rights commitments and obligations.

We urge you to take the opportunity of the Summit to announce your support for the establishment of a presidential commission to explore the creation of an NHRI in the United States. In the long run, an NHRI would reinforce and champion the Summit’s “vision of our world that is grounded in democratic values: transparent, responsive, and accountable governance; rule of law; and respect for human rights.” We believe such a commission would represent a truly significant step forward toward bringing human rights home and would be widely welcomed by the countries attending the Summit. We stand ready to support you in this undertaking.

Sincerely,



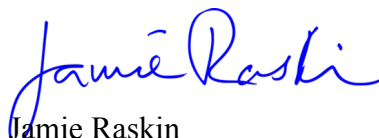
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