

CONVENTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS - 1965

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, in previous Biennial Assemblies, has expressed its unanimous approval of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide which was adopted at the Third General Assembly of the United Nations meeting in Paris in December, 1948. That convention defined genocide as “the committing of certain acts with intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such.” Sixty-eight nations of the world have signed the Genocide Convention and, as the previous Biennial Assembly noted, these nations have included the widest spectrum of the states of the world; we noted, too, that we are mindful of the sanctity of all life and as Jewish women especially mindful of the dreadful tragedy that swept over six million of our brethren in Europe during the Hitler era because of genocide.

But the Convention on Genocide is only one of several Human Rights Conventions adopted by many nations of the United Nations that await action by the United States Senate in order to become documents to which the name of the United States of America is affixed.

Three other major conventions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly or a United Nations affiliated agency were submitted to the Senate of the United States by President John F. Kennedy in July, 1963 for ratification:

1. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women, adopted by the General Assembly in December, 1952 and ratified by 45 countries of the United Nations, also representing a broad spectrum of nations of varying size and strength, but regrettably again, not the United States.
2. The Supplementary Convention on Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, adopted by the General Assembly in September, 1956 and in turn ratified by sixty-one countries of the United Nations including—as do the other Conventions—many of the countries in which there are affiliated units of The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, but regrettably, once again the United States is not yet a signatory.
3. The Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labor, adopted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in June, 1957, and likewise signed by the broadest spectrum of nations also including countries of affiliated units of The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, but again regrettably, not the United States.

Once again, on behalf of our United States units, we call upon the Senate of the United States to ratify these four conventions which are the expression of long held positions and freedoms respected in the United States and in many lands of the world. The United States, as a world leader of freedom, should be in the vanguard and not the rear-guard of those nations that affix their signature to these conventions of human rights which express necessary ideals and standards, in their respective areas, for all peoples.

While speaking on behalf of its United States members, The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, in Convention assembled in San Francisco, California in November, 1965, would also urge its affiliated members in other countries to study these documents and if their respective nations have not signed each of these conventions to urge such action upon them.