



## Free Press Viewpoint

# Human rights abused by U.N.

In a little-noticed abomination last month, the United Nations elected a batch of countries to its Human Rights Council that should demonstrate to the whole world just where the U.N. stands on human rights.

This bunch of demons – China, Russia, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Algeria – will bring a lot of collective expertise to this so-called world body. It's going to be hard to find a larger collection of human-rights violations than these nations have on their collective ledger.

Where to begin? China, where the government decides how many children couples can have, where there is no political opposition and where dissenters often just disappear? Cuba, where the people have been impoverished by decades of one-man rule, and dissenters are allowed to flee over the ocean in leaky boats?

Or Russia, where those who speak out against the leadership wind up in jail? Where elections end with one man holding the reins of power, no matter who is president? Saudi Arabia, where women can't even drive a car in public?

Or maybe you'd rather live in Vietnam or Algeria?

This Gang of Six was elected to the council by the U.N. General Assembly, giving us a glimpse of how much of the world values human rights. The election prompted a howl of protest from independent human-rights groups, but to no avail.

Other nations in this year's class, the Associated Press reported, included Britain, France, the Maldives, Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia and South Africa. Most have somewhat better credentials for the task.

Seats are allocated by region, with all 198 member nations voting by secret ballot. That makes it hard to figure out how the choices are made.

A group called Human Rights Watch noted that five of the new members refused to even allow U.N. inspectors a visit to check alleged rights abuses. China, Russia and Algeria each has more than 10 outstanding unfilled requests.

Activists from Tibet protested across the street from the U.S. Headquarters in New York, hanging a banner that said "China Fails Human Rights," something of an understatement.

The head of Geneva-based group UN Watch denounced what it considered the worst of the worst, the AP reported:

"China, Cuba, Russia and Saudi Arabia systematically violate the human rights of their own citizens.... For the U.N. to elect Saudi Arabia as a world judge on human rights would be like a town making a pyromaniac into chief of the fire department."

The group criticized the U.S. and the European Union for not denouncing this charade. It and like groups pointed out that while the council regularly cites Israel over the Palestinian issue, it has not once adopted a resolution critical of Russia, China or Saudi Arabia.

All of which is a pretty good argument for declaring that our world organization has a long way to go before it can be considered a champion of rights, any way you look at it. You could argue that no nation is perfect in this field, certainly not ours, but it's obvious the U.N. has no grasp of the issue at all.

— Steve Haynes

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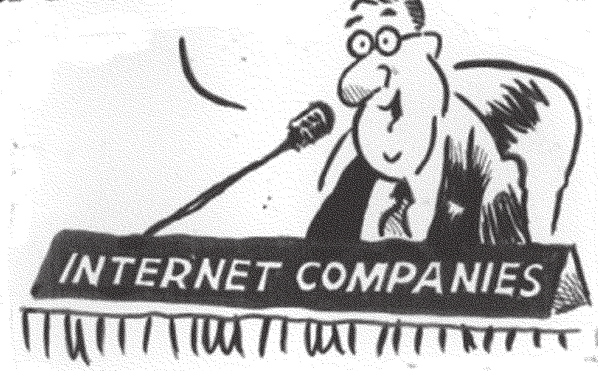
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# Cookie baking has unexpected results

My granddaughter is 3 1/2, and I had great plans to teach her to bake cookies this week.

Some of my fondest memories of my grandmother are standing at her kitchen table and learning to cook. We made cakes and cookies, and she showed me how to measure and mix. I learned how to cream butter and sugar together and add the flour so that the cookies came out light and fluffy. I even remember one time when we made a German chocolate cake with boiled icing from scratch, although we both agreed in the end it wasn't really worth the trouble and bought a mix the next time.

Looking back, however, that cake and all those cookies were so worth the trouble. They were a time of togetherness and learning. Mother was a good cook, but she didn't bake when I was young. Grandmother did all of that stuff, and Mom was happy to let her. And, I'm sure, it was nice to have a break from two busy children underfoot when I went over to grandmother's.

So, I thought, I should continue that tradition. I should find cookie recipes and take them to Georgia with me so that Taylor Tot and I can do some serious bonding over the batter.



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

Finding cookie recipes around Christmas time is about as hard as finding snow in the Colorado mountains. I soon had clippings from newspapers and magazines and copies out of my hundreds of cookbooks. I was set.

Daughter Lindsay and I looked over the selection when we arrived in Georgia, and picked out four likely candidates that looked like they would be tasty, not too hard to make and, most important of all, not require tons of stuff that wasn't already in the pantry.

We sent Taylor's dad after the stuff we didn't have or would need to replace, and we were ready to go.

But, by then it was bedtime for Taylor, so her mother and I started the dough and put it in the refrigerator to finish in the morning.

The next day, Taylor was more interested in cartoons and playing outside with Papa Steve than making cookies, so Lindsay and I made the first batch of thumbprint cookies ourselves.

She soon made a batch of Tollhouse cookies because her husband loves chocolate and was looking sad that the thumbprint cookies had no chocolate chips in them.

Then we decided to make hummingbird cookies with cream-cheese frosting. They had nuts, fruit and coconut in them, and while the recipe called for three dozen, when we were done, there were 18 big cookies on the counter and Taylor was still off playing with Papa.

Like so many great plans, mine did not turn out quite as I had hoped, but Lindsay and I had a great time, and so did Taylor and Steve. Maybe next time.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at [c.haynes@nwkansas.com](mailto:c.haynes@nwkansas.com)

# Mandela memories strong today

On Feb. 11, 1990, I, along with millions around the globe, sat riveted to my television waiting for Nelson Mandela to emerge from 27 years of captivity.

The high drama of that day remains etched in the memory of anyone who witnessed it, in person or from their living room. A decade later, when I visited South Africa, there was one "must see" on my list – Robben Island, the Alcatraz-like prison off the coast of Capetown where he had spent most of those years.

For me, Mandela's death this past week brought back memories of that trip. Arriving in Capetown in the late afternoon, I raced to Table Mountain, a point in the city with a panoramic view of the surroundings. There it was, a few miles off the coast and clearly in view.

The next morning, I caught the first ferry over to Robben Island. Visitors were driven around to several stops in school buses. Our guide was Elias Mzamo, a gentleman who had spent five years imprisoned on the island after being convicted in 1963 for "furthering the aims of a banned organization (the ANC, African National Congress)."

Mzamo was one of 10 former prisoners who worked as guides on Robben Island. He could speak at length about both his treatment in prison as well as the island's history.

The emotional highlight of the tour for me was our glimpse into Cell Number 5, formerly occupied by Mandela.

I wondered if any of these former prison-



**Alan Jilka**

• A Voice of Reason

ers resented the fame and notoriety that their fellow prisoner had achieved and I asked Mr. Mzamo if he had had any recent contact with Mr. Mandela. He replied that Mandela had attended a reunion of former island prisoners while president, and his achievements were a source of pride among his former peers.

Before leaving Robben Island, we passed through a small gift shop where I purchased a copy of Mandela's book "Long Walk to Freedom." I would highly recommend this autobiography to anyone.

As we contemplate the epic life of this man this week, I take away three principal lessons: First of all, in life one should look forwards, not backwards. Mandela effectively had his middle age taken away from him, being sentenced to life in prison at the age of 44 and remaining imprisoned until the age of 71. Yet, many of his greatest achievements occurred after his release, and such success would have been impossible if he had wasted time after his release being angry over the past.

A second lesson that comes out clearly in

his autobiography is the importance that he placed on health and physical fitness. Mandela took up boxing as a young man for the exercise it provided and maintained a fitness regimen throughout his life to the degree possible. When not subjected to hard labor in the Robben Island rock quarry, he even exercised regularly while in prison. The importance he placed on daily exercise surely contributed to his long life.

And lastly, his life is a testament to an ability to resist and overcome the bitterness that so naturally could have befallen a man who suffered so much at the hand of his apartheid-era oppressors. His example speaks to both individuals and countries.

In the midst of the celebration of his life, we should still remember that he was human and beset by the same frailties that test us all. He himself once said, "I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as just a sinner who keeps on trying."

But in the end, his lasting legacy will be that of a personification of hope – hope for a better future, hope that all can live in harmony, and a hope and belief that our world can be a better place if we take his life's lessons and example to heart.

Alan Jilka is a former Salina city commissioner and mayor. He was the Democratic nominee for Congress in the 1st District in 2010.

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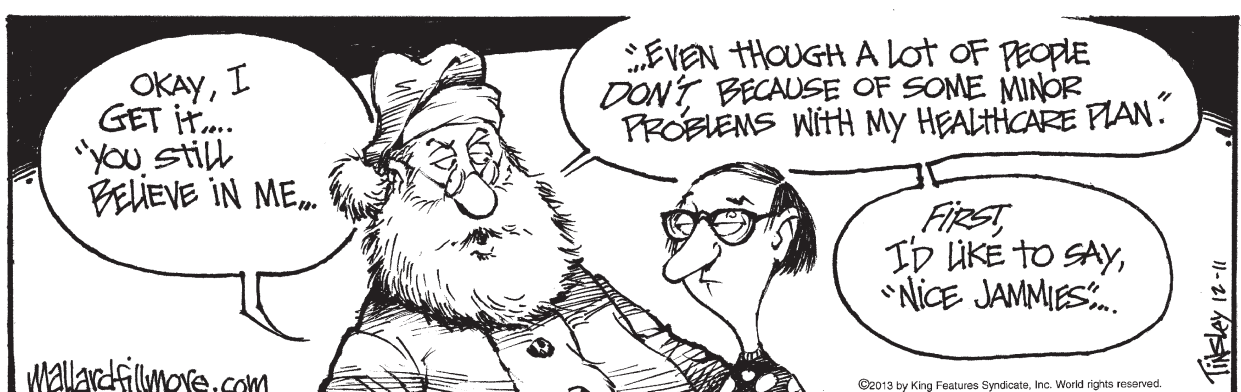
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• Bruce Tinsley



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