

Russia, the United States and Human Rights

By Dr. Scott Lively

Let me be clear from the outset that in my view the United States of America remains the gold standard for human rights in the world and Russia remains an autocratic state with many lingering and greatly disturbing Soviet-era tendencies. On a scale of 0-100 with 100 being the best, the United States is in the high 70s while the Russian Federation is in the mid-50s. The problem is that the United States is rapidly trending downward from a high in the 90s, while Russia has been steadily trending upward from a low in the 30s. It is thus foolish for anyone who cares about genuine human rights to blindly root for one side or the other as if this were a sporting event, though there is plenty of that going on, especially by Russian-bashers trapped in a Cold War mindset.

I am uniquely positioned to comment on this conflict. I graduated Trinity Law School with a de-facto “major” in human rights, and earned a Certificate in International Human Rights from Strasbourg. I have traveled extensively in the former Soviet Union, where I lectured on human rights in numerous universities, and, while in Latvia, I authored the Riga Declaration on Religious Freedom, Family Values and Human Rights in 2007. In my capacity as President of Defend the Family International I was in Moscow last October and met with high level representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russia’s pro-family movement.

I am also the first American to be sued, here in America, for “Crimes Against Humanity” under the Alien Tort Statute (ATS), by the ironically named “Center for Constitutional Rights”(CCR), for preaching against homosexuality in Uganda. (I

am a pastor as well as a lawyer.) This still pending case is subjecting my First Amendment rights as an American citizen to a European legal standard in U.S. Federal Court, for speech that was protected both in the U.S. and Uganda. What is more, my case is the only ATS case not dismissed following the 2013 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to all but strike down the Alien Tort Statute. Some people believe that the continuation of this case is itself a human rights abuse:

www.massresistance.org/docs/gen2/13d/lively-lawsuit-ponor-issues/index.html.

What made the United States the freest and most prosperous nation in the history of the world was Christianity; not the theocratic version that existed in Europe, but the Christian self-governance model of our Founding Fathers. Their view of “unalienable rights” “endowed” on us by our “Creator,” not the state, is the foundation of American human/civil rights. When they crafted the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution it was not by accident that the first principle was religious liberty, even ahead of freedom of speech. Indeed, our second president and co-author of the Declaration of Independence, John Adams, issued a fervent warning to future generations that “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

The ancient foundation-stone of all modern human rights law in the world today is the Magna Carta, signed in Britain in 1215. Importantly, that document, too, sets as its first principle “ that the Church of England shall be free, and shall have all her whole Rights and Liberties inviolable.”

It is therefore obvious why America is in decline and Russia is on the ascendancy in the matter of human rights. America has largely turned her back on God, reorganized her government and culture on a statist model, and is plummeting in a death spiral of moral and ethical degeneracy. As our collective former (Bible-based) values of self-restraint and personal responsibility steadily decline, external controls and surveillance by the new police state increase. The rule of law becomes the rule of man, and equal justice under law becomes special rights for favored groups.

Conversely, Russia has begun embracing Christian values regarding family issues, albeit imperfectly, in stark contrast to its aggressively godless Soviet past. Repression in Russia is decreasing as rapidly as it is increasing in the U.S..

The crux of the human rights debate is what it means to be human. Russia appears to be returning to its pre-Soviet understanding that humans are made in the image of God, and that our “rights,” are really duties of respect and care for each other which are imposed on us by Him. This is why the first principle of both the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights is the protection of the Christian church, from which the very concept of modern human rights emerged. And this is why the greatest point of conflict between the U.S. and Russia is the question of homosexuality. (I believe even the conflict in Ukraine is being driven to a large extent by this issue, at least on the part of the Obama State Department and the homosexualist leaders of the E.U.)

There is no human right to sodomy to be found in nearly 4000 years of human rights jurisprudence. It is an invention of Cultural Marxists in the late 20th century, and rests on their dangerous premise that the state, not God, grants us our

rights. In fact, the “right” to sodomy is really an anti-right, because it can only be granted at the expense of the true human rights of religious freedom and family values. Thus, the first principle of the Magna Carta stood unbreakable in Britain for almost 800 years until the recent introduction of “sexual orientation regulations” (SORs) and the first principle of the First Amendment stood for over 200 years until SORs were passed here in the United States.

Today, both the Magna Carta and the First Amendment are deemed to be trumped by the “right to sodomy” in case after case, and pro-homosexual activist federal judges in the U.S. are striking down “Defense of Marriage” laws in the most morally conservative states in the union with brazen disregard for the constitution and the will of the people.

I ask you, which is the greater threat to human rights: Russia’s law preventing homosexual activists from disseminating their propaganda to children, or the lawless decrees of these American federal judges? I submit that the former is not a threat at all, but a reaffirmation of true human rights (in that case the right of parents to raise their children according to their own values), while the latter is an egregious affront to liberty and an undermining of respect for the rule of law, which endangers all human rights.

Russia has a long way to go even to meet today’s tarnished standards in America, but if current trends hold, Russia will eventually supplant the U.S. as the greater defender of true human rights. Unfortunately, at the pace that our country is falling, that day may not be far off.