

**Remarks by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the conference
“Human Rights Defenders on the Frontlines of Freedom,”
Nov. 11-12, 2003, Atlanta, Ga.**

We are delighted to have this assembly here. It is a great honor for The Carter Center, and I want to welcome all of you. We have the largest committee on human rights represented here. We have America’s Watch represented here and other groups. We don’t have any governments represented here right? Nobody directly representing any government is here, so we can speak very freely about governments without fear of having too much competition or contradiction here in this meeting.

It is a pleasure to reminisce with you for a few moments at the beginning of this program, and then to cover a few issues. Twenty-sevn tT1a.00149T hy g160T Tmgoctioseedo,elcbec 1(nts n Tm[Irtng

and Burundi in the Great Lakes area (of Africa), and eventually we saw the need of an International Criminal Court. The Carter Center was the host in the United States for more than one conference to promote the concept of the International Criminal Court. We were never able to get our own government to participate in a positive way. Most of them, the U.S. representatives, raised objections to the key points that would have been crucial to the International Criminal Court. But in the last few days of President Clinton's administration, he did agree, somewhat reluctantly, to sign this authorization for the International Criminal Court. With the advent of the Bush administration however, as you know, there's been a literal crusade against the implementation of the International Criminal Court.

So there have been struggles for a long time over this inherent and all pervasive concept of governments being abusive to their own citizens, which is a key factor that precipitates human rights violations. It breeds disrespect for the government. It results in a few courageous people like the defenders represented here being willing to speak out and explain, within their own countries and to the world, this is happening in my country. It's a direct violation of the principles of human rights that have been established, even shortly after the United Nations itself was established. Those defenders, quite often, are persecuted by their governments. This creates additional animosity, hatred, and violence, within the countries affected. That is one of the breeding places for terrorism.

We have continued our efforts, along with many of you, in trying to promote human rights. It has not been always successful. There are gross human rights violations still throughout the world, as many of you can testify directly. I read some of the testimony that you've given here already, with the advent of the attack on the United States known as 9/11, our country began to make, in my opinion, some very serious mistakes. It was natural for a nation with approximately 3,000 people killed in the worst terrorist attack perhaps in history to react in a way to de0031 Tc -tD9 -i6.9elyatio -1713ki1713ere's b

We've been to war many times in our country—Vietnam, the first world war, the second world war and others that I need not name, the Gulf war, so-called, the first war against

holds a doctorate in international law from the London School of Economics, and we are honored to have him here with us this morning. I'd like to now introduce Berti Ramcharan to make some remarks.