

Universal Periodical Review

Forth Cycle
43rd Working Group

BAHAMAS



Right to Life
Right to peace
Related Human Rights Issues

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“From the politics of taking life to the politics of affirming it”

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Thank you for your kind support at www.nonkilling.org

**We understand the right to life
as being the full enjoyment of life,
as being the right not to be killed,
as being everyone's responsibility not to kill or let others die.**

The Center for Global Nonkilling has a unique mission,
inspirational for individuals and transformative for societies:
*"To promote change toward the measurable goal of a killing-free world,
by means open to infinite human creativity in reverence for life".*

With our sincere wishes for the good life, for peace, progress and celebration!

Wishes for life stand without doubts or explanations: enjoy life!

Wishes for Peace because peace is the first tool in the survival kit: the most long-term one.

*Wishes for Progress because there is plenty of space left for
more individual and universal well-being, when our dedication occurs
and if short- and long-term well-being concur.*

Wishes of Celebration because nothing stands below the Celebration of Life.

The Center for Global Nonkilling (CGNK) was founded by Glenn Paige (1929-2017), Professor of political science, author of the book "Nonkilling Political Science"¹. CGNK is a worldwide congregation of persons, scholars and others, working at creating societies that do not kill and enabling all individuals not to do so. We are all nonkilling centres and we are all global. Valuing and protecting life in all its dimensions is a fulfilling mission for everyone².

We use the Universal Periodic Review cycles to highlight and follow through all aspects of the fulfillment, the progress and the respect of the right to life, individually as universally. So far unable to monitor the situation of all aspects of life in all countries, we make three types of UPR submissions:

- *Country portraits*, as comprehensive as possible, stating all domains where the State and the people can progress towards fulfilling the right to life, celebrating life and preventing accidents and injuries.
- A universal call for the urgent ratification of the *Genocide Convention*.
- A universal call for the *decriminalization of suicide*.

To any of these submissions, we may add reflections and demands regarding the Life and Peace Constitutions. These improvements to the legal status of life and on the establishment of comprehensive peace policies are developed and sometimes added as annexes³.

Summary

This is our first submission for the Bahamas⁴.

This submission focuses on the decriminalisation of suicides.

However, we also here call for saving lives by the lowering the homicide rate and until done, for the abolition of the death penalty, the ratification of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances and for all improvements needed for the universal quality of life.

Suicide decriminalization

Life is both a gift and a responsibility, individually and in common.

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Bringing life to happiness, for all and thus largely eradicating suicide is a chosen and noble goal. This intent can be inferred from the World Health Organization's ongoing work on the prevention of suicide⁵, as from the – our Sustainable Development Goals: “to reduce of a third, by 2030 the number of deaths attributed to suicide”⁶.

Suicide decriminalization and prevention in the Bahamas

Data related to suicides in the Bahamas is easily available and most likely reliable⁷.

Gladly the rate is very low, both in absolute (11 reported cases in 2020) and proportionally (3.4/100,000 – World rate = 10.5/100,000).

However, there was a sharp raise of the rate starting in 2004 (from 2.3 to 3.7/100,000) and the rate has been stable at the heightened level ever since, including in the last seven years since the adoption of the SDG's⁸.

This goes to say that much more shall and can be done to save lives, and to fulfill the SDG target 3.4.2. Suicide prevention is not mentioned in the country's latest Voluntary National Report (VNR) in 2018⁹.

Regarding preventive measures, we are happy to note that there is in the Bahamas a dedicated phone hotline¹⁰. However, despite the fact that there is a very good suicide prevention page on the Royal Bahamas Police Force web page¹¹: **committing suicide is still punishable**¹².

This is ambiguous as it may first, prevent from seeking help, at least from the police.

Moreover, criminalization highly limits the possibility of a wholesome approach to the prevention of suicides, in all situations, by the State as by private actors, including the medical sector. Among other inconvenient, criminalization limits the prevention work and the possibility of seeking help, of open treatment of affected persons and for the accompaniment of concerned relatives¹³.

We are well aware of the fact the Bahamas is a small country with limited resources and that suicide cases are few. This may not entice in favor of the design of a full strategic plan to prevent suicides¹⁴. Nevertheless, small gesture, as policies, can make a huge difference and a small change of the penal code is a rather simple and rapid legislative measure, clearly helping to save lives, prevention and treatment work. All other effective life saving measures are also welcome.

We strongly recommend to the authorities of the Bahamas to swiftly change the penal code to decriminalize suicides, and to adopt all other accurate measures to prevent suicides.

*Calling on each and all to attain a nonkilling world,
where life can be happily sustained for all on Earth,
we welcome the delegation of the Bahamas
to Geneva, a City of Peace,
and wish to the delegation
as to all the people of the Bahamas,
a life enhancing, constructive and fulfilling
Universal Periodic Review.*

¹ <http://nonkilling.org/center/publications-media/books-translations>

² <http://nonkilling.org/center/how-to-help>

³ More details are found on other aspects of the right to life in the annex. We did not take the time to develop possible peace policies for The Bahamas in this submission. Some important possibilities are mentioned in the annex. They will be developed in the future to make a separate document. For more detailed examples of peace policies, see among others our submissions for Japan, Iceland, Lesotho or Colombia.

⁴ At the 43rd session of the UPR working group, only the Bahamas was still retaining suicide attempts as an offence.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_legislation.

⁵ Noteworthy, a country guide: “LIVE LIFE: An implementation guide for suicide prevention in countries”, 2021, quoted “Who. Live life”. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240026629>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>

https://www.who.int/health-topics/suicide#tab=tab_1

<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-suicide-prevention-day/2022>

⁶ Text of the Goal is here summarized in the text for direct understanding, the complete version reads:

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Target 3.4: By 2030, **reduce by one third** premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being. *Emphasize added.*

Indicator 3.4.2: Number of Deaths Attributed to Suicide.

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

⁷ Every life counts.

Data may differ (even within UN or related bodies) and they are limitations to suicide reporting as stigma, social and legal regulations and delays may impede the quality of reporting.

We do our best to find various sources and to cross them accurately, but do not always have the time and means needed to contact delegations or local authorities to collect firsthand information.

Foremost, what is important is the preservation of life, as sound and updated the reporting may be.

2019: [https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/suicide-mortality-rate-\(per-100-000-population\)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/suicide-mortality-rate-(per-100-000-population))

2020: <https://thenassaeguardian.com/suicides-rose-by-38-percent-in-2020/>

Suicide SDG reporting (and limitations):

<https://sdg.tracking-progress.org/indicator/3-4-1-number-of-deaths-attributed-to-suicide/>

Other:

<https://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/cause-of-death/suicide/by-country/>

⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.SUIC.P5?locations=BS>.

Of course, viewing the size of the country, a few cases more, or less may highly change the rate. Nevertheless, the stability of the rate in recent years shows a general trend, indeed to be reduced.

⁹ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/bahamas>.

Because of COVID and Hurricane Dorian, The Bahamas did no full VNR in 2021.

¹⁰ Phone : +1 (242) 322-2763 or 911 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_suicide_crisis_lines

Yet, there may be doubt about its efficiency: <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/may/14/we-need-dedicated-suicide-prevention-hotline/>

¹¹ http://www.royalbahamaspolice.org/crimeprevention/personalsafety.php?cp_id=32

¹² Penal code, article 294: “Attempt to commit and abetment of suicide. Whoever attempts to commit suicide is guilty of a misdemeanor, and whoever abets the commission of suicide by any person shall, whether or not the suicide be actually committed, be liable to imprisonment for life”. *Emphasize added.* http://laws.bahamas.gov.bs/cms/en/legislation/all-legislation.html?view=acts_alpha (PDF), retrieved 7.10.22.

The clause has never been changed. It is dated 1927 (enter into force). We did not undertake a jurisprudence research or control to see if the clause has ever been used (or what was its latest use) regarding self-inflicted suicide. This first part of the clause must be repelled.

¹³ On the value of decriminalizing suicide (and of integrating this decriminalization in a prevention strategic plan), see “WHO. Live life”, 2021: p. 12 and 22 (generalities), p. 28 (the example of Ireland), p. 32 (NGO’s, India), p. 39, p. 48 (training of judges, Ghana), pages 66 and 77 (shows how decriminalization is key for proper reporting).

Important: on the inexistent deterrent effect of criminalization and the absence of raise of the rate after decriminalization, see: Wu KC-C, Cai Z, Chang Q, et al. “Criminalization of suicide and suicide rates: an ecological study of 171 countries in the world”.

BJM, 2022. <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/12/2/e049425>.

¹⁴ However, a comprehensive life-saving policy – we are not aware of one – could and should be designed, in line with SDG 16.1, and shall include homicides, for which as in the whole region the rate is still high in the Bahamas, even if recently declining: 2020, 73 persons, 18.56/100,000 (world 6.1/100,000).

<https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-intentional-homicide-victims>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_intentional_homicide_rate#cite_note-UNODC-2019-4

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=BS>