

# Human Rights Record of the United States in 2018

## 2018 年美国的人权纪录

State Council Information Office of  
the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国国务院新闻办公室



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## 图书在版编目 ( C I P ) 数据

2018 年美国的人权纪录：汉英对照 / 中华人民共和国国务院新闻办公室编. —北京：五洲传播出版社，2019.3

ISBN 978-7-5085-4144-0

I . ① 2… II . ① 中… III . ① 人权—白皮书—美国—2018—汉、英  
IV . ① D771.224

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2019) 第 051211 号

## 2018 年美国的人权纪录

编 者：国务院新闻办公室

出 版 人：荆孝敏

责任编辑：高 磊

助理编辑：高倩倩

制 作：北京翰墨坊广告有限公司

出版发行：五洲传播出版社

地 址：北京市海淀区北三环中路 31 号生产力大楼 B 座 6 层

邮 编：100088

发行电话：010-82005927，010-82007837

网 址：[www.cicc.org.cn](http://www.cicc.org.cn) [www.thatsbooks.com](http://www.thatsbooks.com)

印 刷：北京光之彩印刷有限公司

版 次：2019 年 3 月第 1 版第 1 次印刷

开 本：889×1194mm 1/32

印 张：3.5

字 数：55 千

定 价：32.00 元

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March 2019

## Foreword

On March 13 local time, the State Department of the United States released its 2018 country reports on human rights practices, continued pointing fingers at and slandering human rights situations in over 190 countries, while blindly ignoring its own serious human rights problems. If one takes a glimpse into the human rights situation of the United States in 2018, it will not be difficult to find that the United States government, a self-styled “human rights defender,” has a human rights record which is flawed and lackluster, and the double standards of human rights it pursues are obvious.

-- **Gun violence poses grave danger.** There were a total of 57,103 gun violence incidents in the United States in 2018, leaving 14,717 killed and 28,172 injured. The number of children and teens killed or injured was 3,502. Gun violence has

shortened the life expectancy of Americans by nearly 2.5 years.

-- **Religious intolerance remarks were on the rise.** The mid-term elections in 2018 saw a surge of anti-Muslim opinions. A report found that conspiracy theories targeting Muslims have increasingly entered the political mainstream. "More than a third have claimed that Muslims are inherently violent or pose an imminent threat," and "Just under a third of the candidates considered have called for Muslims to be denied basic rights or declared that Islam is not a religion."

-- **Internet surveillance becomes a common practice.** The warrantless wiretapping program PRISM is operating around the clock, vacuuming up emails, Facebook messages, Google chats, Skype calls, and the like.

-- **Money politics prevail in the United States.** The total cost of the 2018 mid-term elections was 5.2 billion U.S. dollars, a 35 percent increase over 2014 in nominal dollars, making them by far the most expensive mid-term elections on record. The U.S. government is representing the super rich.

-- **The United States has the highest rate of income inequality among Western countries.** The share of the top 1 percent of the population in the United States owned 38.6 percent of total wealth. In relation to both wealth and income, the share of the general public has fallen continuously. Nearly half of the American households live in financial difficulties and 18.5 million Americans live in extreme poverty.

-- **Hate crimes surged to new height.** A report released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in November 2018

said hate crimes rose by about 17 percent to 7,175 cases in the United States in 2017. Offenses motivated by racial prejudice made up about 60 percent of hate crimes, with African-Americans being targeted in nearly half of them.

-- **The living conditions of African-Americans are worrisome.** The median white family has about 10 times as much wealth as the median black family. African Americans are 2.5 times as likely to be in poverty as whites, about twice as likely to be in unemployment as whites, and more than 6 times as likely as whites to be incarcerated. The infant mortality rate is 1.3 times higher for African Americans, whose average life expectancy is about 3.5 years shorter than whites.

-- **There were endless school shootings.** Last year, a total of 94 school shootings occurred across the United States and left 163 people dead or injured, making it the worst year on record with the most school shooting cases and the most severe casualties. Violent incidents in schools also increased 113 percent from the previous school year.

-- **Women are living in fear of sexual harassment and sexual assaults.** A survey found that 81 percent of women interviewed had experienced some form of sexual harassment, and 27 percent said they had been sexually assaulted.

-- **Immigration policy separated children from parents.** A new “zero tolerance” policy inaugurated by the U.S. government in April 2018 has separated at least 2,000 migrant children from their families. There has also been a startling increase in the number of instances where U.S. Border Patrol officers have

mistreated or sexually abused juvenile migrants.

-- **Flagrantly withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council.** *The Atlantic* said in an online analysis that one of the most likely, and most insidious, arguments for the move is to prevent the United States from being called out on its own alleged human-rights abuses.

## **I. Frequent Infringement on Civil Rights**

The United States reported frequent occurrence of violent crime cases, rampant gun crimes and the abuse of power by public officers, while surveillance was unchecked and unscrupulous and press freedom was hollow.

**Serious violent crimes took place frequently.** According to the 2017 edition of the FBI's annual report, *Crime in the United States*, released in September 2018, there were an estimated 1,247,321 violent crimes, including 17,284 incidents of murder, 135,755 rapes, 810,825 aggravated assaults, as well as 319,356 robberies. Among the cases, 72.6 percent of murders, 40.6 percent of robberies, and 26.3 percent of aggravated assaults were committed with firearms ([www.ucr.fbi.gov](http://www.ucr.fbi.gov)). Chicago was named as one of the most dangerous big cities in the United States, as hundreds of people were murdered each year in recent years. On August 4 and 5, 74 people in the city were shot, and 12 of them died. Tens of thousands of young Americans fled from the cities with rampant violent crimes (Wall Street Journal, August 9, 2018).

**Gun violence continued to be rampant.** According to data

from the Gun Violence Archive, the United States reported 57,103 incidents of gun violence, resulting in 14,717 deaths, 28,172 injuries, including casualties of 3,502 juveniles ([www.gunviolencearchive.org](http://www.gunviolencearchive.org), data recorded on February 24, 2019). On May 18, in a mass shooting in the Santa Fe High School near Houston, Texas, 17-year-old Dimitrios Pagourtzis killed 10 people and wounded more than 10 others with a shotgun and a pistol. Explosive devices were found inside the school and nearby ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), May 19, 2018). On November 8, Marine Corps veteran Ian David Long broke into a bar in Thousand Oaks, California, fatally shooting 12 people and wounding many ([www.nbcnews.com](http://www.nbcnews.com), November 9, 2018). *The Huffington Post* reported on December 6 that gun violence has shortened the life expectancy of Americans by nearly 2.5 years, with shooting driving down the average lifespan of African-Americans by 4.14 years, based on official data on gun deaths between 2000 and 2016.

**Press freedom suffered from unprecedented blow.** According to a May 2, 2018 report from the international non-governmental organization Article 19, the environment for the press in the United States has further deteriorated, with journalists occasionally being attacked, searched, arrested, intercepted at borders, and restricted from publishing public information. The U.S. government has often publicly and vehemently accused the media and journalists of making “fake news,” creating an intimidating and hostile environment. Thomas Huges, executive director of Article 19, pointed out that threats to press freedom in the United

States have been climbing alarmingly in recent years ([www.article19.org](http://www.article19.org), May 2, 2018). *Newsweek* published a story on August 16 that the standoff between the U.S. government and media in the past year has eroded the country's press freedom.

**The legitimate rights of interviewing by reporters were infringed.** On November 7, 2018, to stop White House correspondent from CNN from asking follow-up questions, staff at the White House attempted to take the microphone away from the correspondent and revoked his press pass ([uk.reuters.com](http://uk.reuters.com), November 19, 2018). *The Columbia Journalism Review* reported on January 19 last year that the United States arrested journalists 34 times in 2017, nine of whom were accused of felony. The equipments of 15 journalists were confiscated, while 44 journalists suffered from personal attacks.

**Religious intolerance remarks were on the rise.** *The Guardian* reported on October 22, 2018 that during the 2018 U.S. midterm elections, anti-Muslim rhetoric increased dramatically, with report showing that conspiracy theories targeting Muslims have increasingly entered the political mainstream. "More than a third have claimed that Muslims are inherently violent or pose an imminent threat," the report found, adding that "just under a third of the candidates considered have called for Muslims to be denied basic rights or declared that Islam is not a religion."

**Online surveillance by the U.S. government infringed individual privacy.** It has become a common practice by the NSA, FBI, and CIA to gather and search through American's international emails, internet calls, and chats without obtaining a war-

rant. The PRISM program operates around the clock, wiretapping emails, Facebook messages, Google chats, Skype calls and the like without authorization ([www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org), August 22, 2018).

**A large number of protesters were arrested.** *The Chicago Tribune* reported on June 28, 2018 that 575 people were arrested while protesting against the Trump administration's immigration policy in Washington D.C., most of whom were female. From September 4 to 6, U.S. Capitol Police arrested 212 people that protested Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing, and another 300-plus protestors were arrested on October 4 ([chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com), June 28, 2018; [thehill.com](http://thehill.com), September 6, 2018; [edition.cnn.com](http://edition.cnn.com), October 5, 2018). Reuters reported on December 11 that 32 religious leaders and activists were arrested at the U.S. border fence in San Diego during a protest to call for an end to the detention and deportation of the Central American migrants.

**Miscarriage of justice resulted in wrongful convictions.** In May, 2018 Philip Alston, special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights for the UN, published a report saying that in the U.S. justice system, wealthy defendants are allowed to regain their freedom through bails while poor defendants have no choice but to stay in jail. *The New Yorker* reported on February 6 that a jury in Bronx of New York City vindicated Edward Garry's 23-year quest to clear his name, finding him not guilty of a 1995 murder ([newyorker.com](http://newyorker.com), February 6, 2018).

*The Washington Post* reported on December 19, 2018 that a man from Baltimore was wrongfully convicted of first-degree

murder. During the investigation of the case, local police did not investigate his alibi or other suspects, resulting in him serving 27 years in prison.

**Public officers abusively exercised violence.** According to reports released on the website of the U.S. Department of Justice on July 11 and November 8, former private prisoner transport officer Eric Scott Kindley committed, during his tenure, several armed sexual abuses or assaults on female prisoners, resulting in severe bodily and emotional harms to the victims. Several officers at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana were found to have beaten an inmate who was handcuffed and shackled, leaving the inmate with severe injuries. They also conspired to cover up the beating ([www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)). *The New York Daily News* reported on December 18, 2018, citing the Associated Press, that two South Florida prison guards assaulted and intimidated several young inmates, severely infringing the rights of those detained.

## **II. Money Politics Prevail in the United States**

The U.S. 2018 midterm elections cost a huge quantity of money. Elections became the games of money, with much involvement of “dark money” and corruption. Cases of politicians involved in corruption were not rare and the government served as the spokesperson of the rich.

**The “most expensive” midterm elections in history.** The 2018 midterm elections were proved to be by far the most expensive ones on record. The final cost of 2018 midterm elections

stood at 5.2 billion U.S. dollars, a 35 percent increase over 2014 in nominal dollars, the Center for Responsive Politics said on November 8, 2018 ([www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org), November 8, 2018). The Texas Senate race was the most expensive House or Senate race in U.S. history, with Democrat candidate Beto O'Rourke alone setting a record by raising 69.1 million U.S. dollars ([www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com), November 16, 2018).

**Secret money donations and “dark money” swept over the elections.** According to an NBC report on July 21, 2018, U.S. Treasury Department announced that it would no longer require most non-profit organizations to report their donors, making elections much less transparent. During the 2018 midterms, a record high of 98 million U.S. dollars in dark money were spent by outside groups other than the candidates' campaign committees. More than 40 percent of television advertisements broadcast by outside groups to influence congressional elections were financed by secret donors and over one-fourth of the advertising funds for House and Senate elections came from groups that did not disclose their donors. Airings by “dark money” groups in federal races since the 2014 midterms jumped by 26 percent ([www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com), July 12 and November 16, 2018).

**Electoral corruption became severer.** *The Guardian* reported on August 7, 2018, that U.S. elections were widely seen to be corrupt by the public. Members of Congress were viewed to be captured by corporations, wealthy donors and special interests groups. The average cost of winning a Senate seat was 19.4 million U.S. dollars while winning a House of Representa-

tives seat would cost at least 1.5 million U.S. dollars on average. Election fraud such as using money in exchange for votes was common. According to a report of *The New York Times* on its website on November 20, 2018, the Los Angeles district attorney announced that nine people had been charged with paying homeless people with one dollar bills and some cigarettes in exchange for signing names on voter registration forms.

**U.S. Government served as the spokesperson of the rich.** According to a report released by Philip G. Alston, special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights for the UN, the combined wealth of the United States cabinet reached about 4.3 billion U.S. dollars, turning the U.S. government into the spokesperson of the rich people. Former Arkansas State Senator and State Representative Henry Wilkins accepted bribes in exchange for voting in favor of the intentions of lobbyists, according to a statement on the website of U.S. Justice Department on April 30, 2018. Influenced by lobbyists, Florida governor Rick Scott cut 700 million U.S. dollars in funding for water management, *Miami Herald* reported on August 2, 2018. The reduction led to a severe red tide crisis, causing the death of marine life and endangering the health of coastal residents.

**Politicians' corruption scandals were seen constantly.** Former Tallahassee mayor Scott Maddox faced a 44-count indictment including bribery, extortion and fraud, *Miami Herald* reported on December 8, 2018. A prominent Texas senator was accused of using her influence to try to end an investigation into a bar she and her husband owned, according to the website of

the *Houston Chronicle* on June 8, 2018. *The Week* published an article titled “Corruption is eroding American democracy” on its website on December 14, 2018, saying corporations captured U.S. politicians with campaign donations and promises of future bribes so that politicians would make legislations on behalf of their businesses.

**The public had pessimistic attitudes towards U.S. politics.**

A Pew Research Center survey on American democracy and the political system released on April 26, 2018, showed 53 percent of the surveyed said the United States did not respect “the rights and freedoms of all people.” *The Newsweek* reported on June 26, 2018 that a poll showed 55 percent of Americans said democracy in the United States was “weak” currently, and 68 percent said they believed democracy in the United States was “getting weaker.”

### **III. Income Inequality Continued to Rise**

Poverty rate in the United States remained high. Income inequality continued to rise. Almost half of American households lived under financial strain. Low-income populations lacked health insurance. The number of homeless people stayed high.

**The United States had the highest rate of income inequality among Western countries.** The U.S. Census estimated that 13.4 percent of Americans, about 42 million, lived below the poverty line in 2017. More than 5 million Americans who work full-time jobs year-round earned less than the poverty line. According to a report by the Brookings Institution, the disabled

generally had a harder time finding steady work and earning above-poverty wages. About 25.7 percent of the disabled lived in poverty (www.usatoday.com, October 10, 2018 and November 19, 2018).

In May 2018 Philip G. Alston, the United Nation's special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, published a report saying the United States had the highest rate of income inequality among Western countries. According to the report, 18.5 million Americans lived in extreme poverty. The country had the highest youth poverty rate in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In 2016, the top one percent of the richest population in the United States owned 38.6 percent of total wealth. In relation to both wealth and income the share of the common people had fallen in most of the past 25 years. Alston further pointed out that the U.S. government's series of economic stimulus measures in recent years only benefited the rich, not the common people. "The U.S. government's policies provide unprecedentedly high tax breaks to the very wealthy and the largest corporations and pay for these partly by reducing welfare benefits for the poor. The tax reform will worsen inequality."(www.washingtonpost.com, June 25, 2018)

**Almost half of American households lived in financial difficulties.** On July 17, 2018, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders wrote in an article published on *The USA Today* website, saying 43 percent of U.S. households lived paycheck to paycheck and can't afford to pay for their housing, food, child care, health