

Biography

Michael H. Posner

Assistant Secretary

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

Term of Appointment: 09/23/2009 to present

Michael H. Posner was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor on September 23, 2009.

Prior to joining State Department, Mr. Posner was the Executive Director and then President of Human Rights First. As its Executive Director he helped the organization earn a reputation for leadership in the areas of refugee protection, advancing a rights-based approach to national security, challenging crimes against humanity, and combating discrimination. He has been a frequent public commentator on these and other issues, and has testified dozens of times before the U.S. Congress. In January 2006, Mr. Posner stepped down as Executive Director to become the President of Human Rights First, a position he held until his appointment as Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Posner played a key role in proposing and campaigning for the first U.S. law providing for political asylum, which became part of the Refugee Act of 1980. In 1998, he led the Human Rights First delegation to the Rome conference at which the statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) was adopted.

Mr. Posner also has been a prominent voice in support of fair, decent, and humane working conditions in factories throughout the global supply chain. As a member of the White House Apparel Industry Partnership Task Force, he helped found the Fair Labor Association (FLA), an organization that brings together corporations, local leaders, universities, and NGOs to promote corporate accountability for working conditions in the apparel industry. He also was involved in the development of the Global Network Initiative, a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at promoting free expression and privacy rights on the internet.

Before joining Human Rights First, Mr. Posner was a lawyer with Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal in Chicago. He lectured at Yale Law School from 1981 to 1984, and again in 2009. He was a visiting lecturer at Columbia University Law School since 1984. A member of the California Bar and the Illinois Bar, he received his J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley Law School (Boalt Hall) in 1975, and a B.A. with distinction and honors in History from the University of Michigan in 1972.