



12 for 2012: KEY QUESTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR THE 2012 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

The next President of the United States will face myriad challenges that will test the depth of commitment the next executive has to protecting and promoting human rights in the U.S. and around the world. Will the United States be a human rights leader, or will it be an occasional actor, when objectives coincide with national security imperatives, or will it allow and even contribute to the erosion of the global framework that it helped to create over 50 years ago to protect the human rights and dignity of the individual?

Amnesty International USA has developed 12 questions for the 2012 presidential candidates on key human rights issues the U.S. government must address, with the aim of securing a commitment from the candidates to take concrete action in each of these areas upon taking office. For more of Amnesty International's human rights concerns regarding the U.S. government, please visit www.amnestyusa.org.

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- 1) Will you implement a plan to close the detention center at Guantánamo, end indefinite detention and military commissions, and ensure that all detainees are either charged and fairly tried in U.S. federal court, or released to countries that will respect human rights?
- 2) Will you end unlawful killings, bring the use of drones in line with international human rights and humanitarian law, and make public the Department of Justice memo that reportedly details the legal rationale for "targeted killings?"
- 3) Will you provide U.S. leadership to ensure the successful completion of the process advanced this year to enact a global Arms Trade Treaty that regulates the trade of ammunition and conventional weapons, and incorporates robust human rights requirements?
- 4) Will you expand the United States' cooperation with the International Criminal court; reaffirm the U.S. signature of the Rome Statute; and support the U.S. ultimately joining the Court?
- 5) Will you call on the Senate to ratify the human rights treaties the U.S. has not yet joined, each supported by well over one-hundred countries around the world including most if not all U.S. allies, including, in particular, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights?

6) Will you commit to more vigorous enforcement of the Leahy Law – which requires the State Department to vet its assistance to foreign security forces – to ensure that recipients have not committed gross human rights abuses, and end the practice of providing waivers on national security grounds to allow U.S. military aid to be channeled to human rights abusers?

7) Will you commit to a principled approach to human rights abuses in the Middle East and North Africa, including toward governments that are U.S. allies but are falling short of their human rights obligations? If the U.S. government's urging does not improve deteriorating human rights conditions in a key ally country such as Bahrain or Saudi Arabia, will you commit to taking steps to back up U.S. statements with actions?

8) Will you adopt a concrete plan for Afghan women in advance of the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Afghanistan that ensures that Afghan women are meaningfully represented during the peace and reconciliation talks; results in more women at all levels of the Afghan National Security Forces; and ensures implementation of the Afghan law on Elimination of Violence against Women and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan?

9) Will you commit to challenge African governments to meet their obligations under international law and the African Union Charter to respect the rights to freedom of speech, association and assembly, enabling all individuals to participate freely in their societies, and to combat discrimination so that no one is targeted on account of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity?

10) Will you commit to prioritizing passage in the Congress of comprehensive immigration reform legislation that would protect undocumented immigrants from exploitation by traffickers and unscrupulous employers; create opportunities for immigrants to attain legal status in the United States; bolster oversight and accountability for the conduct of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers; and provide families with avenues to be reunited or remain together?

11) Will you issue an Executive Order on Human Rights to ensure that full spectrum human rights promotion and enforcement are prioritized among all federal agencies and departments and in all legislative policy and regulatory decisions; and by monitoring and accountability offices throughout the United States government? Will you commit to rigorous follow up on recommendations made by international human rights bodies and meaningful periodic consultations with civil society on the implementation of the U.S.'s human rights obligations?

12) Will you commit to support a comprehensive review of the U.S. criminal justice system charged with recommending reforms to address mass-incarceration, racial and other disparities at all stages of the system, and violence and abuse in prisons?