

#HumanRightsFerguson



Dear Amnesty leaders,

On August 9, Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year old, was shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Just a few days later we headed to Ferguson, Missouri as part of AIUSA's 13-person human rights delegation.

When human rights are at risk, it takes unified action to make a difference. As field organizers, we heeded the call from community members who requested our presence, and led a 300-person training on Nonviolent Direct Action. While other member leaders and staff were there as observers documenting arrests, blockades on West Florissant Street, and treatment of journalists- the two of us were present at coalition meetings, listening closely to the strategies devised by local community organizers, and seeking ways to amplify their voices. What struck us most was the power of collaboration- when organizers make the concerted effort to seek out new relationships and build together, they make a movement stronger. We are hoping that as you read this toolkit, you too, are moved to connect Amnesty with the communities and activists around you. We've provided a timeline of actions we're hoping you can help organize leading up to a national mobilization on October 11th.

The shooting of Michael Brown has sparked a long-overdue conversation on race, policing and justice, and we are committed to making sure that these issues remain heard long after the cameras are gone. By organizing vigils and group conversations, you can help think about how this issue affects your own community. By taking to the streets on October 11th with other activists around the country, you can stand with Ferguson residents rallying for justice. By taking demands for accountability directly to your Members of Congress, you can ensure sustainable change.

Like many of you, we joined Amnesty International because we care about dignity, solidarity, and justice for all. We are in awe of the creativity and resilience of community organizers in Ferguson who have refused to have their fundamental human rights restricted, and inspired by the millions participating in the movement. Please take a few minutes to read through this toolkit and decide how you will use your voice to amplify the call for rights-respecting and accountable policing.

In Solidarity,
Kalaya'an Mendoza and Noor Mir



Amnesty in Ferguson: History & Talking Points

The #HumanRightsFerguson Delegation: On August 14, Amnesty International USA sent a delegation of representatives to Ferguson in order to shine a light on what's happening on the ground so the Ferguson police, as well as the rest of the world, would know that we are watching. AIUSA deployed a multifunctional human rights delegation as soon as the protest broke out. Subsets of the staff and volunteer leaders acted as human rights observers by gathering testimonies and bearing witness to events as they unfolded; others helped build partnerships, held nonviolent direct action trainings, and offered other support as needed.

Is this response unprecedented? As one of the world's largest grassroots organizations, Amnesty International has a long history of monitoring and investigating police conduct throughout the world, including in the US. Amnesty has conducted research missions on everything from prison abuses to immigration to violence against Native American and Alaskan women. Amnesty members and staff have directly engaged in organizing and activism on a full range of issues, and have mobilized in response to crises including the execution of Troy Davis.

The primary purpose of Amnesty's work is to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are at stake. We investigate and expose abuses, educate and mobilize the public, and engage in transformative action to create a safer and more just world. When the US government demands that governments in other countries improve their human rights records, we must hold it accountable by asking it to be transparent about its own human rights abuses with regard to policing.

Building a movement: Our aim isn't just to visit Ferguson and leave. We're in it for the long run, and not just around Ferguson and Michael Brown—we're participating in a national conversation around race, justice and policing in the United States. By pairing policy and legislative work with the work of community organizing, we know that a larger and transformative movement is possible. We will do the nitty gritty of putting the pieces together, from the petitions to the policy, but we need you to galvanize your community to action.

Collaboration: There are amazing organizers on the ground in Ferguson who have been leading the struggle for police accountability for a long time. We're working closely with the Organization for Black Struggle, Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment, and other Ferguson community leaders. We're also side-by-side with youth-led national organizations like Million Hoodies Movement for Justice and Black Life Matters.

There are activists and groups in your area - faith communities, student groups, and other organizations - that continue to lead efforts to advance rights-respecting and accountable policing. By connecting with other human rights and social justice organizations in your communities, having honest and transparent conversations on race and policing, and generating actions, we'll be a part of driving true change.

What are we calling for?

- A prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the shooting of Michael Brown.
- All forces – including state troopers and the National Guard – involved in policing the ongoing protests in Ferguson must act in accordance with international human rights standards. Any human rights abuses must be independently and impartially investigated, and those responsible must be held accountable.
- There must be a thorough review of all trainings, policies and procedures with regards to the use of force – including the use of “non-lethal” and “less than lethal” weapons –and the policing of protests.
- Attorney General Eric Holder should ensure that the Department of Justice civil rights investigation of the Ferguson Police Department will include policing of protests in Ferguson.
- Amnesty International is calling for the creation of a national commission to examine police tactics nationwide, including the use of excessive or unnecessary force, the militarization of local police forces and the policing of protests.

- The Department of Justice must collect and publish statistics on police shootings, something that it has been required to do and has failed to complete since 1994. We know about Michael Brown, but how many more police shootings are there?
- Congress must pass the End Racial Profiling Act, which would compel all law enforcement agencies to ban the practice of racial profiling, document data on stops, searches and arrests disaggregated by both race and gender, and create a private right of action for victims of profiling.

Take action: Strategy and Tactics

Your activism will energize and inspire activists on the ground in Ferguson, put pressure on the Department of Justice and Missouri officials to thoroughly investigate police trainings and tactics pertaining to the use of force and push Congress to pass laws that protect human rights. Your voice, connected to the power of a global movement, is what makes a difference, and we've listed ways to get started below. By driving people to take action at www.amnestyusa.org/ferguson, you can build the movement that is changing the world.

We've put together a suggested timeline, below, and please [click here](#) to request support, including How-To Guides, for each suggested action. Whatever you end up doing, make sure you let us know by using the hashtags #Ferguson and/or #HumanRightsFerguson, and sending updates and pictures to your Student Activist Coordinator, Area Coordinator, or Field Organizer!

Timeline for action

- **Now through early October:** Vigils and memorials to raise visibility in your community.
[Click here](#) to let us know what you have planned, and request support materials!
- **Late September through mid-October:** Community conversations on race and policing to educate your community about human rights issues, and activate them to join the movement.
[Click here](#) to let us know what you have planned, and request support materials!
- **October 10-13:** Public actions in solidarity with people of Ferguson to show the world that it's time for policing that respects human rights.
[Click here](#) to let us know what you have planned, and request support materials!
- **Mid-October through November:** Join our grassroots legislative push to pass the End Racial Profiling Act!
[Click here](#) to let us know what you have planned, and request support materials!





Throughout the world individuals face harassment and imprisonment as a result of peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. Everyone has the following fundamental human rights:

- **Freedom of Expression and Assembly:** Everyone has the right to carry their opinion to the streets. People have the right to organize peaceful protests and demonstrate free from intimidation, unnecessary or excessive force, and the threat of prosecution and detention.
- **Protection of the Right to Freedom of Assembly:** Law enforcement must facilitate and not restrict a peaceful public assembly. Where a minority tries to turn a peaceful assembly into a violent one, law enforcement should protect the peaceful protestors and not use the violent acts of a few as pretext to restrict or impede the exercise of fundamental rights of a majority.
- **Freedom from excessive use of force:** In the policing of non-violent protests, police must avoid the use of force. If it is unavoidable (for example to defend themselves or the public from an imminent risk of serious injury or death) they must use the minimum amount of force necessary. The type of equipment used to disperse crowds such as rubber bullets, tear gas, stun grenades can result in serious injury and even death and can only be used when necessary, proportional and lawful.
- **Right to Medical Assistance:** If you are injured you have a right to medical assistance without delay.
- **Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Detention:** If you are arrested you have a right to be told of the reason for your arrest, you also have the right promptly after your arrest to have access to a lawyer and to your family. No person under any form of detention may be subject to torture, or to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- **Right to Complain:** If your rights have been violated you have a right to file a complaint and to be provided information on how to do so. All violations of human rights by the police or other law enforcement personnel must be investigated fully, promptly and independently.



GOOD PRACTICE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

POLICING DEMONSTRATIONS

Governments and law enforcement authorities, in particular, must ensure that everyone within their territories can enjoy their human right to peaceful assembly, and that the rights to life and to be free from torture and other ill-treatment are respected at all times. The UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials must be the guiding principles underpinning all operations before, during and after demonstrations. Law enforcement officials should:

FACILITATE peaceful public assemblies.

- It is the legitimate right of people to carry their opinion to the streets. Public assemblies should not be considered as the “enemy”. The command hierarchy must convey a clear message to law enforcement officials that their task is to facilitate and not to restrict a peaceful public assembly. This must be clearly understood by all law enforcement officials taking part in the management of the assembly.
- In the policing of assemblies that are unlawful but non-violent, law enforcement officers must avoid the use of force. If it is unavoidable, for example to secure their safety and the safety of others, they must use the minimum necessary and comply with the UN Basic Principles.

PROTECT peaceful public assemblies, including against violent individuals or smaller groups.

- Minor violations of the law, such as billposting, littering, minor damage to property caused by a large group of people gathering together, may lead to investigation and eventual individual liability. However, in view of the importance of the right to freedom of assembly, this should not lead to a decision to disperse an assembly.
- The decision to disperse an assembly should be taken in line with the principles of necessity and proportionality, only when there are no other means available to protect public order from an imminent risk of violence.
- Where a small minority tries to turn a peaceful assembly into a violent one, law enforcement officials should protect the peaceful protesters and not use the violent acts of a few as a pretext to restrict or impede the exercise of fundamental rights of a majority.

DE-ESCALATE tense or violent situations.

- Communication with organizers and demonstrators before and during the operation should aim to create mutual understanding and prevent violence. Where outbreaks of violence are highly probable – for instance in the context of sensitive anniversaries or linked to the public outcry against austerity measures – communication with organizers and demonstrators becomes even more important, in order to reduce tension and to avoid unnecessary confrontation. Law enforcement officials and organizers should look together for ways to prevent violence or to stop it quickly as soon as it breaks out.

DE-ESCALATE

Protesters take part in a demonstration called by the opposition coalition parties in Bucharest on 19 January 2012.

FACILITATE PROTECT

- When a (lawful) decision has been taken to disperse an assembly, the order to disperse must be clearly communicated and explained, to obtain, as far as possible, the understanding and compliance of the demonstrators. Sufficient time must be given to disperse.

USE police powers only for lawful aims.

- Force should not be used to punish the (presumed or alleged) non-compliance with an order nor simply for the participation in an assembly.
- Arrest and detention should be carried out only in accordance with procedures established by law. They should not be used as means to prevent peaceful participation in a public assembly nor as a means of punishment for participation.

MINIMIZE damage, preserve and respect life and protect uninvolved people. Use force only to the extent necessary, and only when non- or less-violent means have failed or are unlikely to achieve the legitimate objective.

- Firearms or shotguns should never be used for the purpose of dispersing a crowd.
- Batons and similar impact equipment should not be used on people who are unthreatening and non-aggressive. Where baton use is unavoidable, law enforcement officers must have clear orders to avoid causing serious injury and that vital parts of the body are excluded as target zones.
- The type of equipment used to disperse an assembly must be carefully considered and used only when necessary, proportional and lawful. Policing and security equipment – such as rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades, often described as “less-lethal” weapons – can result in serious injury and even death. Chemical irritants, such as tear gas, should not be used where people are confined in an area and not in a way that can cause lasting harm (such as at too close range, or directly aimed at people’s faces).
- Clear orders should be given to all law enforcement officers that medical assistance to anyone injured must be provided without delay.

BE ACCOUNTABLE to the public and to the judiciary for all operations.

- Any use of force during a public assembly should be subject to review, and where appropriate, investigation and disciplinary or criminal sanction.
- Complaints against police must be effectively and impartially investigated, and where appropriate, subject to disciplinary or criminal sanction.
- Law enforcement officials should be identifiable during public order operations (either through name or number tags). Enforceable orders





Resources on Race, Rights and Police Brutality in the United States (not an exhaustive list)

AIUSA Blog Posts About Ferguson:

<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/tag/ferguson/>

USA: Race, Rights and Police Brutality:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/147/1999/en/6e339ef0-e038-11dd-865a-d728958ca30a/amr511471999en.html>

USA: Rights for All:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/035/1998/en/0440cd04-da99-11dd-80bc-797022e51902/amr510351998en.pdf>

Stonewalled: Police Abuse and Misconduct Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People in the US:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/122/2005/en/2200113d-d4bd-11dd-8a23-d58a49c0d652/amr511222005en.pdf>

Threat and Humiliation: Racial Profiling, Domestic Security and Human Rights in the USA:

http://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/rp_report.pdf

USA: “Less than Lethal?” The Use of Stun Weapons in US Law Enforcement:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/010/2008/en/530be6d6-437e-4c77-851b-9e581197ccf6/amr510102008en.pdf>

USA: Torture, Ill-treatment and Excessive Force by Police in Los Angeles, California:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/076/1992/en/d2ae229d-f6f3-458a-ab03-666a103e7382/amr510761992en.pdf>

California: Update on Police Brutality:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/150/1999/en/2955b76e-e033-11dd-865a-d728958ca30a/amr511501999en.pdf>

Summary of Amnesty International’s Concerns on Police Abuse in the Chicago, Illinois:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/168/1999/en/6911d657-e013-11dd-adf6-a1bae6c1ea26/amr511681999en.pdf>

Rights for All: Program for Action on Human Rights in the USA:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/051/1998/en/76174de8-d9cb-11dd-af2b-b1f6023af0c5/amr510511998en.pdf>

Rights for All: Human Rights in the USA:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR51/054/1998/en/4d5e67b6-d9c5-11dd-af2b-b1f6023af0c5/amr510541998en.pdf>