

Amnesty International members only

# 33<sup>rd</sup> International Council Meeting

## Circular 15: Secretary General's Report

**AI Index:** ORG 50/6571/2017  
**To:** Sections and structures  
**ICM Session:** Session 6: Secretary General Report  
**From:** Secretary General, Amnesty International, International Secretariat  
**Date:** 11 July, 2017

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

This document meets the requirement for the Secretary General to provide a report for the 2017 ICM "summarizing the work done by the International Secretariat on human rights and organizational and resource matters, and its main achievements and pending challenges, as well as the most significant successes achieved by the different sections, since the previous International Council Meeting, and including information on the activities of the Secretary General with regard to the fulfilment of his/her internal and external responsibilities."

### DISTRIBUTION

This is an internal discussion circular which is being sent to all sections and structures.  
Please circulate this document to all people in your section/structure who are involved in ICM discussions.

**Papers List**

All ICM papers and background papers are available on the ICM website: password 2017ICM\_Rome (o = zero)



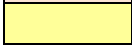


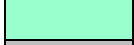

[2017 ICM website](#)

Release date	Circular No.	Paper title (Circulars 1, 3 and 4 have been removed from this table, but are available on the ICM website)	Session	AI index number
Oct 2016	2	Call for internationally elected positions	N/A	ORG 50 4954 2016
June 2017	5	Section and structure voting entitlements	S26 & S27	ORG 10/6318/2017
June 2017	6	Second version resolutions, preliminary costings and draft agenda	Full ICM	ORG 10/6316/2017
June 2017	7	Governance Reform: The new Governance Model explained	Governance Reform working party	ORG 10 6247 2017
June 2017	8	Governance Reform: Frequently asked questions		ORG 10 6248 2017
June 2017	9	Development of a Policy on State Obligations on Elections	HR Pol working party	ORG 10/6310/2017
June 2017	10	Human Rights aspects of climate change		ORG 10/6302/2017
June 2017	11	Drugs and Human Rights		ORG 10/6311/2017
June 2017	12	Military Occupation as an Amnesty Policy Issue		ORG 10/6312/2017
June 2017	13	Civil disobedience and boycotts	S11 & 12: HR workshop 2	ORG 10/6181/2017
July 2017	14	Update on implementation of 2015 ICM decisions and International Board and International Treasurer's Report	S6	ORG 10/6474/2017
July 2017	15	Secretary General's report to the ICM	S6	ORG 50/6571/2017
July 2017	16	State of the movement report	S16	ORG 10 6459 2017
July 2017	17	Final version draft agenda, preparing for the ICM	Full ICM	ORG 50/6572/2017
July 2017	18	Nominations to internationally elected positions	S7	ORG 50 6568 2017
<b>Post ICM papers</b>				
Aug 2017	N/A	2017 ICM Decisions Report	N/A	TBC
Sep 2017	N/A	Report of the 2017 ICM	N/A	TBC

**Background papers**

Release date	Paper title	Sessions	AI index number
July 2017	Discussion framework for Governance Reform Working Parties (FULL)	Governance Reform working party	ORG 50/6521/2017

**Session key**

	ICM plenary session		HR Policy working party
	ICM plenary: HR context		Workshop
	Governance Reform working party		Organisational working party
			Regional meetings

## Contents

<b>Introduction: a changing world</b>	4
<b>Action for human rights impact</b>	4
<b>Innovating for change</b>	8
<b>Ensuring Amnesty is fit for purpose</b>	8
<b>Addressing challenges: where next?</b>	9

## Background papers

<b>Paper title</b>	<b>AI index number</b>
2017 ICM Circular 16: State of the Movement Report	ORG 10/6459/2017

## **INTRODUCTION: A CHANGING WORLD**

The period since the 2015 ICM has presented striking new human rights challenges, which have had a direct impact on Amnesty's ability to operate effectively. Old conflicts remain intractable and new ones have emerged, often with flagrant disregard for civilian protection and the laws of war. The global refugee crisis has escalated, met with shameful failure from world leaders. Heads of state from the USA to Turkey to the Philippines have launched assaults on human rights in different ways, peddling divisive rhetoric of "us versus them" and introducing fresh threats and instability. Among the worst manifestations has been the killing of human rights defenders (HRDs) expressing their dissent peacefully. Intractable emergency laws and massive crackdowns no longer make the news. Faced with an assault from many directions, human rights themselves appear to be on trial.

These trends have impacted Amnesty directly – to highlight only a few, the June 2017 arrest of Amnesty Turkey Chair Taner Kılıç sent shockwaves through the movement, while Amnesty India faced an onslaught after being accused of sedition in August 2016, and the current and former chairs of Amnesty Thailand faced prosecution for reporting on torture before charges were dropped. Numerous other Amnesty entities have faced serious threats, notably Amnesty's fledgling presence in Nigeria. In January 2016, we lost two people contracted for a specific assignment in Burkina Faso, Leila Alaoui and Mahamadi Ouédraogo, who were tragically killed during an Al Qaeda attack.

However, against a difficult backdrop we have also seen what people can achieve when they refuse to accept injustice. Across Africa people's movements have risen up and brought change – The Gambia's peaceful transition in January 2017 was a particular moment of hope. Search and rescue operations by NGOs in the Mediterranean and the generous outpouring of personal support from Hungarian families showed how Europeans were not willing to stand by while governments abdicated their legal and moral responsibility and even let refugees drown. Subversive commemorations in China of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tiananmen Square show that even in the most repressive contexts people will find ways to be heard.

This has also been an important period for the Amnesty movement, in which we are starting to see the fruits of the difficult but important internal changes we have made. But there is no room for complacency given the difficult context and the scale of challenges we have set ourselves. We are close to the midway point of our 2016-19 Strategic Goals period, and while we are seeing impact, much work remains, especially to make Amnesty a truly global people's movement for human rights.

With my monthly reports and annual presentations at the CADF, I have tried to create a system of regular and externally-focused reporting. My quarterly report to the International Board is also now routinely made available to the movement. I hope this has made the role and contribution of the Secretary General and the International Secretariat (IS) not only more transparent and accountable but also exciting and motivating. I hope therefore that nothing in this document is new to you.

## **ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT**

For the first time, we are able to track movement-wide progress against our Strategic Goals. Using a simple measure, 70% of sections and structures, and 43% of IS (international) projects that self-reported on their impact noted at least one concrete action at the national level to address an issue they are working on. Many outcomes are the result of sustained work on an issue over a long period.

Many of the inspiring successes achieved by sections and structures are detailed in the State of the Movement Report. Among those to celebrate is the continued rise of Write for Rights, with 4.5 million actions from 1.3 million people in 2016, an increase of 24% from 2015 – especially thanks to the outstanding

increase from sections including Poland, Portugal, Senegal and Taiwan, and of course the continued solid performance of those reaching large numbers like France. Much of the success of sections and structures has been in the crucial domain of influencing public opinion. This reflects the campaigning, awareness-raising and community engagement which they are ideally placed to advance. Impact in international projects has more often been in targeted, one-off actions, reflecting a growing advocacy capacity, especially in Regional Offices.

As planned, in the last two years I have focused on externally-oriented work towards achieving our strategic goals through a combination of country visits involving high-level advocacy with governments or regional bodies, speaking roles and lectures, top-tier media, and fundraising. Since the 2015 ICM I have carried out missions involving high-level advocacy with government or regional bodies to Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey, and the USA. I have taken up major speaking roles at the UN General Assembly, Davos, Munich Security Conference, World Humanitarian Summit, Tana Forum, and Conference of the Americas, as well as co-chairing the World Economic Forum ASEAN meeting in 2016, and speaking at number of others. In addition, I have strengthened links with key leaders at the UN, including meetings with former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, new Secretary-General António Guterres, High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, former Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and his successor Amina Mohammed, and Under Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien.

In terms of media work, I have had approximately 13,000 hits (mentions in news articles) since the last ICM. This has included frequent op-eds and interviews with top-tier outlets with a global reach, such as Al-Jazeera, BBC, CNN, New York Times, and others.

### ***Goal 1: Reclaiming freedoms***

The backlash we are seeing across the world against those seeking to defend and promote human rights is affecting every other area of work. Attacks on the legitimacy of human rights as a whole is affecting everything that we are seeking to achieve.

Our global campaign, Brave, brings fresh focus to the worldwide attack on HRDs, building on longstanding and strong work from the IS and sections in this area. Careful messaging and campaigning on China contributed to the release of lawyers arrested in 2015. Work around elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contributed legitimacy to emerging pro-democracy movements – and after we awarded the 2016 Ambassador of Conscience in Dakar to one of the youth groups, LUCHA, its leader was released by President Kabila. We have reacted swiftly to protect civil society in crisis contexts. And we have been proactive in brokering conversations about the situation of HRDs with governments such as Afghanistan, Honduras and Mexico, and with tech companies such as Skype, Snapchat and Twitter.

A 2016 international project in the Americas seeking to defend and support land and environmental rights defenders showed how a range of tools can make an impact. By playing a convening role, bridging ESCR and freedom of expression work, and using tactics such as broadcasting on community radio, we saw outcomes including the release of activists in Guatemala, the arrest of eight suspects for the murder of Berta Cáceres, and consultations on protection mechanisms.

We face a significant challenge to build positive narratives for human rights – one reason our human rights education (HRE) work is so important. From the integration of HRE into the national school programme in Moldova, now implemented by 10% of all schools, to the Kenyan government's active support for our

Human Rights Friendly Schools project, we are seeing significant steps. Our first progress report shows that we have reached at least 800,000 people around the world in more than 190 countries. Our Human Rights Friendly Schools project is working with 240 schools in 23 countries. We have established a Human Rights Academy, both online and offline. Our Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are enabling us to develop a new generation of HRDs.

I have also invested some of my time on increasing our visibility in the field of technology and human rights, speaking at several significant gatherings. These included a big debate on the right to privacy at Web Summit, one of the top tech gatherings in the world; the opening of RightsCon, an important forum on tech and rights; a speech on artificial intelligence and human rights at the AI for Good Summit; and lectures at Stanford and the Indian Institute of Technology. We are gradually being accepted as an expert voice in this domain. To take forward our work and position ourselves as a key player, we are on the verge of establishing a presence in Silicon Valley – a joint initiative with Amnesty USA following building on a similar partnership with Amnesty Germany.

### ***Goal 2: Securing equal rights for all***

Our goal of creating long-term strategies and tools to fight inequality and exclusion, promoting poverty reduction and sustainable development could not be timelier. The scale of this challenge is huge but since the movement's decision to embrace the indivisibility of all rights was made in 2000, we cannot afford to lose more time.

Where we have had targeted work, we have seen positive outcomes through a blend of approaches including legal advocacy, mobilisation, and HRE – often acting within broader coalitions, and using an approach of persuasion with governments. The highest concentration of outcomes has come as a result of ongoing work by sections and structures, including legislative changes combating violence against women which Amnesty Paraguay and Amnesty Togo helped bring about. The international project on albinism in Malawi was an interesting case where tightly focused work yielded quick and clear results. Under pressure of public campaigning and media, the President made commitments to address discrimination. We continue to push for real change on the ground.

I had the unique privilege of speaking to heads of state and government on behalf of civil society at the High Level Segment at the UN General Assembly that launched the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015. The four tests I set out remain relevant today: ownership and active participation (ensuring that poor and marginalised people are primary decision-makers); accountability of governments to their people; non-discrimination; and coherence.

Predictably, the structural nature of the issues we are tackling under Goal 2 requires a deeper root-cause analysis to develop long-term strategies that will really engender change. Ultimately, this will take more than law and policy changes. But Amnesty is still a relatively new and welcome voice in this struggle for equality, bringing in the power of our global movement and a sharp accountability and enforceability angle, leveraging human rights law where appropriate. Our work on women's rights and gender is starting to gain in strength in some regions but remains weaker than it should be. We have identified this as a key priority along with ESCR and discrimination more broadly.

### ***Goal 3: Responding to crises***

Work under this goal has been exceptionally challenging – some conflicts have deepened, others (such as South Sudan) have recommenced. Others like Ukraine and Kashmir are shelved by the media under the unfortunate category of "frozen" conflicts. While we are making a sustained effort on the refugee crisis, the

irresponsible arms trade, and ensuring international mechanisms work effectively to protect civilians, getting short-term results is never easy. Since we joined calls for the permanent five members of the UN Security Council to withhold their veto in cases of mass atrocity crimes, I have continued to press this case both inside and outside the UN.

The *I Welcome* campaign was launched in difficult times, with the demonization of refugees and migrants a huge threat to refugee protection especially in Europe and the USA. But for those fleeing war and persecution, the campaign was timely. 40% of sections have already reported some gains. Canada, Argentina and Iceland have seen notable commitments to resettle refugees, partly as a result of our work. We have made a significant contribution to other victories, including Italy appearing to end the worst violations in the "hotspots" we highlighted in November 2016; and some emblematic cases such as Heba from Libya who will be granted asylum after efforts by Amnesty Spain. But the challenge overall remains huge, and we are responding to the need to focus on alternative approaches. Amnesty Poland's inspirational *Look Beyond Borders* video set a high benchmark for the movement in our efforts to shift narratives, and we are now engaged in the potentially game-changing global drive to promote more community sponsorship of refugees.

In 2016 I visited Iraq and saw some of the violations committed by Iraqi forces in operations to retake areas from so-called Islamic State (IS) control. Even in difficult contexts like this we have influence – we brought to light a detention centre which led to over 300 detainees being released.

#### ***Goal 4: Ensuring accountability***

The struggle for accountability is often arduous. But success, when it comes, is joyous. The February 2016 release of Albert Woodfox after 44 years in prison in Louisiana, most of it in solitary confinement, was a cause of celebration – the fruit of years of campaigning by our movement.

We are making progress under this goal, but in very specific areas. Most of our victories are coming in criminal code reform in specific countries, but we are fighting against the tide. A major pushback against the ICC has been tempered slightly, but remains a threat. Counter-terror legislation and states of emergency pose significant threats to human rights. Despite setbacks, our work on the death penalty has been a huge success story during its 40 years. The death penalty has now been completely abolished in 104 countries – sections have played an important role in recent abolitions, including Benin and Mongolia. The 2017 annual death penalty statistics report launch in Hong Kong, alongside a China-specific investigation, had a strong impact.

We have made good progress on corporate accountability, with a number of companies making commitments with regard to their supply chains. Our work on Corporate Crime Principles has seen us advance criminal cases in Canada and UK. A highlight for me was a one-on-one meeting with Apple CEO Tim Cook on the issue of child labour in cobalt mining in the DRC. I followed this by joining a protest action outside an Apple Store organised by Amnesty Canada in Montreal. Our campaign on this has triggered significant action at company and industry level to address the abuses we highlighted. We have also carried out high quality media work to build pressure on abuses against migrant workers in Qatar.

#### ***Goal 5: Maximising our resources and engagement***

Time and again, people outside Amnesty tell us there are two things that make us unique. First, that we are a movement of ordinary people that together create extraordinary positive change for human rights. Second, that we are a *global* movement. Building the movement and making it truly global is not an optional extra. It is what makes us special and impactful.

Goal 5 is not about chasing higher numbers of people and money as ends in themselves but to increase human rights impact. It is equally about participation and diversity, bringing in new people and enabling them to be part of the process of change. 2017 was the first year when we collectively projected our growth ambitions as a movement, a huge step forward. We know our ambitions require a shift to digital-first approaches and innovation in how we organize and mobilize our activist base.

We are currently estimating that by 2019 we will have a gap of 10 million between our number of supporters and the target of 25 million. While we can document an initial growth in numbers from the baseline of 3m in 2012, we have also refined our definitions and can now confidently say that we are at a total of 5.5m supporters globally. With a strategic approach and greater ambition we can narrow the remaining gap. Total fundraising income in 2016 was €279 million, 4% above budget and 2% above 2015 actual. That is getting us closer to the €400 million target for 2020. There is still a projected gap of €38 million, but we have made strides in raising significant sums of money at the IS from major global foundations, the potential of the Global Council and major donors is starting to yield fruit, and some sections like Amnesty Switzerland and Australia are implementing ambitious plans.

### **INNOVATING FOR CHANGE**

We are seeing clearly the need for growing sophistication at a time when we cannot take the success of our traditional approaches for granted. We are combining “name and shame” approaches with more government engagement, and mobilising and equipping HRDs. We are also investing in meaningful ways in local human rights movements. 20% of outcomes identified as the most significant in our international projects were with national civil society, rights-holders or local groups – helping to increase their capacity, coordination, credibility and visibility. This is directly correlated to the establishment of Regional Offices, and offers a positive indication that we are starting to leverage our distributed structure more effectively.

Our burgeoning use of technology is also very promising. Tech-enabled research and campaigning has taken some of our work to a new level, including a project with Forensic Architecture to model the horrendous detention centre in Saydnaya which won a Peabody-Facebook award for excellence in digital reporting. The Decode Darfur project was another success, enabling us to expand our documentation of civilian suffering with the help of thousands of digital volunteers – with over 16,000 people contributing 4,150 hours we had the equivalent of two years' work from a full-time staff member. In Brazil, a smartphone app called “Fogo Cruzado” was downloaded by more than 50,000 people, enabling them to report armed violence in the favelas during the Olympic Games – more than 1,000 violent incidents were reported, 15% of which included police violence.

### **ENSURING AMNESTY IS FIT FOR PURPOSE**

The Global Transition Programme which has consumed a lot of our time is now behind us. Since 2015, offices have been opened in Bangkok, Beirut, East Jerusalem, Lima and Tunis, and most recently in Colombo, adding to those in Dakar, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Mexico City and Nairobi. The Final Assessment provides a rich analysis which, along with the staff engagement survey and other reflections, offer us the ingredients for a new roadmap under the name of *Fuerza*, which will help us make the most out of our ground presence and optimise our global resources.

The IS has concentrated on establishing effective tools for collaboration, to ensure our globally distributed organisation is able to work efficiently. Technology has played a key role, with nearly every part of our IT infrastructure replaced with modern, secure and reliable technology, and a high level of IT services offered regardless of location. Highlights include the rollout of Microsoft Office 365 to replace Lotus Notes, the



establishment of Nolwazi (the new IS intranet) and establishing information systems that will allow the movement to collaborate in a frictionless way. Six sections have joined the IS in a common information-sharing and collaboration environment. The new London office space has created improved spaces for flexible and collaborative working. The proceeds from the sale of the second building have been used to create a Fundraising Investment Fund, and the IS has put in place a framework to allocate and monitor this fund.

There has been a significant push within the IS to build a stronger security culture, from risk assessments and insurance to staff wellbeing and support, to information security. Although we know of government surveillance, including from the UK, we remain constantly vigilant against the cyber security threats that all organisations face, and have so far avoided any significant incidents.

### ADDRESSING CHALLENGES: WHERE NEXT?

1. **Campaigning:** My Body My Rights and Stop Torture produced important outcomes but did not give us the ambitious results we had anticipated in terms of mobilising populations to support the issues and Amnesty. We have learned lessons from this which we are factoring into the new global campaigns, but we are yet to resolve the challenge – partly because we have been too slow to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the digital revolution.
2. **Advocacy:** We must build a stronger advocacy capacity across the world to leverage our newly distributed, implementing coherent advocacy efforts at national, regional and international levels. Our approach to advocacy must include improving understanding of power structures and building the relationships necessary to achieve change.
3. **Positioning:** Both in countries where we have a new presence and in traditional strongholds, we face challenges in how to talk about our concerns and build broad public support. Our value proposition needs to be clear and concrete, and our offering cannot exclusively focus on addressing issues of interest to relatively small sections of the public.
4. **Speed and agility:** We have made some progress in streamlining approvals processes in the IS, and creating a stronger sense of urgency and a culture of responsiveness. We have some good examples of responding to urgent developments in a timely and creative manner. But too often we are slow and bureaucratic in our responses. This is no longer viable in the age of social media, when local (and some international) organisations are moving much faster.
5. **One Amnesty:** We still face many challenges in optimising our presence at national and global levels. Our Regional Offices require us to have better systems of working together as One Amnesty. But systems can only go so far. The bigger challenge is to establish a shared culture of trust and mutual respect.
6. **Resources:** Our most important resource is our staff and volunteers. We have attracted some amazing talent, particularly in the global south as we have opened our new Regional and National Offices. But recruiting people in the south on this scale has not been easy and remains a challenge. Financial resources available to invest both in sections and our new Regional Offices have been constrained.

As I enter my final year as Secretary General, I am more optimistic than ever about the impact we can have. With our unique movement of people and ability to operate from grassroots to head of state level across the globe, there is much more we can achieve. Faced with an era of division, anger and pessimism, we can be the ones who stand up and tell a different story about the future.