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# Amnesty International USA

## Fall 2013 Resolutions Packet Northeast Regional Conference

November 9, 2013  
Boston, MA

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*NOTE: Background, arguments in favor and opposed, and resource implications are drafted by the National Resolutions Committee with input from resolutions sponsors, members, the Board, and staff.*

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**Resolution 1: Late and Non-Binding Resolutions Rule Changes**

Sponsor all: National Resolutions Committee

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**[A] WHEREAS** the National Resolutions Committee (NRC) is responsible for the orderly administration of the AIUSA Membership Resolutions Process (MRP);

**[B] WHEREAS** the existing policy for considering Late and Non-Binding (also referred to as “emergency”) resolutions requires clarification;

**[C] CONSIDERING** that the NRC has the responsibility to make the initial determination as to whether such resolutions are in order, and should be properly brought before Regional Conferences and/or AGMs for discussion and voting;

**[D] RECOGNIZING** that the attendees at these conferences need democratic pathways to determine whether to discuss and vote upon such resolutions;

**[E] THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the following amendments be made to the MRP Standing Rules to clarify the procedures for considering Late and Non-Binding resolutions:

The following replaces 3(B)(1)(b) and (c):

(b) Late resolutions may be presented at the Regional Conference, subject to a determination by the NRC Regional Representative that they are in order, and the following requirements are met:

- (i) the sponsor or presenter is eligible to vote at the Conference;
- (ii) the resolution does not propose an amendment to the Bylaws or these Standing Rules; and
- (iii) the resolution is submitted to the NRC Regional Representative on paper and electronically, and the sponsor/presenter bears responsibility for providing copies of the resolution text for members of the voting body.

(c) The NRC Regional Representative will determine that a Late resolution is in order if

- (i) the resolution or other resolutions substantially the same have not already been assigned or defeated at the same Conference;

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- (ii) the resolution is timely, meaning that it either addresses a human rights issue arising after the resolution submission deadline, or AI policy or procedural issues on which volunteer input is necessary and appropriate, arising from the floor of the Conference; and
- (iii) the resolution is urgent, meaning that it addresses an issue that cannot wait until the next resolutions cycle.

**[F] THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this text replace 3(C)(1)(c), and be added as (d):

(c) Non-Binding resolutions may be presented at the AGM, subject to a determination by the NRC that they are in order, and the following requirements are met:

- (i) the sponsor or presenter is eligible to vote at the AGM;
- (ii) the resolution does not propose an amendment to the Bylaws or these Standing Rules; and
- (iii) the resolution is submitted to the NRC on paper and electronically, and the sponsor/presenter bears responsibility for providing copies of the resolution text for members of the voting body.

(d) The NRC will determine that a Non-Binding resolution is in order if

- (i) the resolution or other resolutions substantially the same were considered at any Regional Conference(s) in the same resolutions cycle, and failed to pass at any such Conference;
- (ii) the resolution is timely, meaning that it either addresses a human rights issue arising after the Regional Conferences, or AI policy or procedural issues on which volunteer input is necessary and appropriate, arising from the floor of the AGM; and
- (iii) the resolution is urgent, meaning that it addresses an issue that cannot wait until the next resolutions cycle.

**[G] THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this text be added as 3(E):

- (e) Late and Non-Binding resolutions determined to be out of order by the NRC may nevertheless be considered by the Regional Conferences or AGM if the voting body votes to add the resolution to the agenda by a 2/3 majority.

**Background:**

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The AIUSA Members Resolutions Process (MRP) is intended to provide an orderly method for members to consider, discuss, and vote upon resolutions. In order to obtain the broadest possible consideration by the membership, the normal procedure calls for resolutions to be brought before one or more Regional Conferences (RCs).

The MRP Standing Rules contain deadlines for submission of resolutions to the National Resolutions Committee (NRC). These deadlines enable the NRC to prepare background materials for each resolution. That information is available on the members section of the AIUSA web site prior to the RCs, and is included in the registration packet received by each conference attendee. The purpose of these materials is to (1) give members an opportunity to review resolutions, and (2) provide basic information for attendees who are relatively new to AIUSA, or who may not be familiar with the subject matter of a particular resolution.

Resolutions that pass at one or more RCs are then placed on the agenda at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), where they are discussed and voted upon once again.

Occasionally, a situation may arise when a member believes that a resolution should be considered at either a RC or the AGM without having gone through the normal process. These are called Late Resolutions at the RCs, and Non-Binding Resolutions at the AGM.

The term “Non-Binding” is used because any resolution that passes without going through the normal procedures is considered advisory only, meaning that it will be implemented at the Board of Directors’ discretion. Resolutions that follow the normal procedures must be implemented, unless overturned by a two-thirds majority of the Board.

Sometimes, however, an issue may arise that some feel requires prompt attention and can’t wait for the normal resolution process. One example might be a human rights emergency that arises shortly before the AGM, or after the submission deadline and before the RCs, i.e. something that could not have been anticipated. Another example could be an organizational problem that has arisen in AIUSA that one or more members believe must be addressed at once.

At the March 2013 AGM, when several Non-Binding Resolutions were proposed, it became clear that the rules needed to be clarified. The purpose of this resolution is to amend the MRP Standing Rules in order to provide a clear understanding of what the criteria for determining a resolutions in order is and what the member’s options are should the NRC rule a later or non-binding resolution out of order.

First, this resolution clarifies the basis for the NRC’s determination as to whether Late or Non-Binding Resolutions are in order. These points are already present in the Standing Rules, but the amendments proposed by this resolution seek to present them in a clearer and easier-to-locate format. The NRC will find a Non-Binding resolution to be in order if the following requirements are met:

- the resolution’s sponsor must be eligible to vote at the conference;

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- the resolution does not propose an amendment to AIUSA Bylaws or the MRP Standing Rules;
- the resolution is timely, meaning that it addresses an issue that arose after the resolutions deadline; and
- the resolution is urgent, meaning that the issue cannot wait until the next resolutions cycle.

Second, the resolution establishes a procedure by which a conference voting body may decide to discuss and vote upon a Late or Non-Binding Resolution even if the NRC has ruled it out of order. Paragraph (G) of the resolution provides that this may be done by a two-thirds majority.

### **Arguments in Favor:**

The normal resolutions process attempts to ensure that resolutions benefit from a careful and informed decision-making process. Providing enough time for the background materials to be prepared is an important part of this, but enabling resolutions to be considered at both RCs and the AGM is also crucial.

Many members who are able to attend their RC cannot make it to the AGM. The requirement that resolutions be considered at both the RCs and AGM ensures that more members will be able to participate in the process.

Resolutions should only be brought forward at the last minute with good reason because such a circumvention of the normal procedure can have unfortunate results. For example, a relatively small group of members at the AGM can succeed in forcing through a proposal that those who only attended RCs had no opportunity to consider, or even be made aware of. In addition, it is difficult for membership to consider the full implications of a resolution without the extensive background research that accompanies resolutions submitted by the deadline.

Reasonable minds can of course differ on whether a particular Late or Non-Binding Resolution warrants immediate consideration or should wait until the following resolutions cycle. This resolution sets out judicious parameters for the NRC to use in making the decision whether to rule such resolutions in order. The NRC also recognizes, however, that the membership may have concerns that it feels need to be addressed right away through the resolutions process, and these may not meet the established criteria for Late or Non-Binding Resolutions. In such cases, this resolution provides the membership with a clear, democratic process to determine whether a particular resolution should be discussed and voted upon.

This resolution supports empowerment of membership by clearly outlining the potential results when a member submits a Late or Non-Binding resolution. It also serves the goal of the NRC to make the process as clear and accessible as possible so that membership has valid channels through which to express concerns.

**Arguments Opposed:**

This resolution is unnecessary. The Standing Rules already provide guidelines and outline the process for Late and Non-Binding Resolutions. The fact that members do submit these resolutions when they feel the need has arisen speaks to the effectiveness of the current process. Paragraphs (E) and (F) of this resolution do not represent a real change; they merely set out more clearly the rules by which the NRC decides whether to rule a resolution in order. The most substantive provision of this resolution is paragraph (G), which gives a resolutions session voting body the power, by a two-thirds majority, to take up a resolution that the NRC has ruled out of order. Since this has essentially been the process, this does not constitute a significant change.

This resolution is also unnecessary because Late and Non-Binding Resolutions are only advisory to the Board. While these resolutions, if passed, lack the background information of those submitted through the standard process, the Board is capable of doing the appropriate research and determining if the resolution is truly in AIUSA's best interest. This provides a safeguard should resolutions have implications that the body did not consider due to their late addition to the agenda.

In addition, because on a small percentage of AIUSA membership attends the AGM, Non-Binding Resolutions that are only considered at that meeting do not represent the democratic process of AIUSA. Those who can only attend RCs would have no voice at the AGM. It is therefore difficult to say that a concern arising for the first time at the AGM accurately reflects the concerns of the larger membership of AIUSA.

The process already presents the opportunity for a small group of conference attendees to propose and pass something at the last moment. In the case of the March 2013 AGM, once the Non-Binding Resolutions were introduced, a vote was immediately called and there was no opportunity for amendment or discussion, a complaint articulated by several members in attendance. This did not reflect the democratic nature of AIUSA. The rules for considering Late and Non-Binding Resolutions should be made more stringent. By maintaining the status quo, this resolution fails to address this flaw in the process.

**Resource Implications:**

This resolution will be carried out by the NRC and has no significant resource implications.

## About Decision-Making and Resolutions in AIUSA

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### Why Resolutions?

Amnesty International is a grassroots organization. Any member or group of members has an opportunity to impact the mission, method, policy, organization or allocation of resources. Resolutions are a means by which individual members or groups of members can influence policy on a regional, national, or international level. The purpose of a resolution is to make a statement to either direct a change in policy, a change in the method for instituting policy, or a change in AI's organizational structure. A resolution can be as simple as asking staff to clarify current procedures, or as complex as requesting a change in AI's mission.

### Initial Considerations

A resolution should be written only after consideration of the following:

1. *Identify the issue:* The sponsor should identify the specific problem that he or she would like to be addressed.
2. *Identify the ideal outcome:* The sponsor should formulate a specific solution to this problem and be clear about what should change and how that change would work. The sponsor considers whether the idea can be handled only by a resolution (i.e., certain policy and/or mission issues), or if it can be handled through discussion with a Regional Office, a Board member, or a volunteer leader.
3. *Learn about the issue:* The sponsor should learn what AI/AIUSA has done on this issue in the past. The resolutions database should be consulted to ensure this issue has not been addressed in a previous AGM decision. If the idea concerns a mission or policy issue, discussion with staff, Board members, or an affected co-group member, at an early stage is advisable in order to guarantee the most effective resolution possible.
4. *Ask for change:* The sponsor should ask for the change from the Board, relevant staff, and/or relevant volunteer leadership structures.
5. After completing these steps and if the response to the request is unsatisfactory, only then should a sponsor submit a resolution.
6. *Focus on substance rather than implementation:* The focus of the resolution should be to put forth an idea for change in program priority, policy, or approach, but the

resolution should avoid mandating specific staffing or budget proposals (i.e. avoid mandating the creation of a new staff position or requiring the expenditures of specific sums of money). The Board and staff should be afforded flexibility in resolution implementation and be able to focus on intent and rather than the administrative details it may require.

### Resolutions at Regional Conferences

Once a resolution is formulated, the author (sponsor) submits it using the Resolutions Submission form and following all guidelines. The resolutions submission deadline is September 1, with an extension until September 15 for members of a registered student groups. The National Resolutions Committee (NRC) will assign resolutions to Working Parties, organize and combine resolutions when necessary, and prepare arguments and background information. The NRC works with the sponsor to further develop the resolution for consideration at the regional conferences.

At the regional conference Working Party, the resolution is debated and voted upon. If passed, it is forwarded to the regional conference Voting Plenary for a final vote.

At the Voting Plenary, all resolutions are again discussed and voted upon, including late resolutions. A late resolution, subject to a ruling from the NRC, may be introduced directly to a Working Party or to the Voting Plenary of a regional conference after all other business has been attended. If it passes the Voting Plenary, it goes to the AGM, as do all the other resolutions that passed the regional conference Voting Plenary session.

### Resolutions at the AGM

The NRC will automatically place all resolutions, which are adopted by the regional conference, on the agenda of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). At the AGM, the resolutions will follow in the same process as the regional conference, going first to the Working Parties and then to the Voting Plenary.

A Non-binding Resolution may also be introduced directly to the AGM either during a Working Party or at the Voting Plenary, if time

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permits. If such a resolution passes at the Voting Plenary, it is considered a Non-Binding AGM Decision, which is still forwarded to the Board for consideration but is in no way binding on the Board.

### Resolutions Forwarded to AIUSA'S Board

Resolutions passed at the Voting Plenary of the AGM are considered AGM decisions and are passed to the AIUSA Board of Directors for implementation. The Board may overturn an AGM decision by a two-thirds vote. Each year the Board submits a report to the membership on the implementation of the previous year's AGM decisions.

### The International Council Meeting (ICM)

The implementation of AGM decisions (resolutions) with implications for the international movement requires that the Board submit a resolution on this topic to the next ICM. The International Council meets biannually to consider resolutions submitted

by Amnesty International sections. The process of consideration is similar to that at the AGM: there are working parties, and voting plenary sessions. Resolutions that pass an ICM are considered ICM decisions and are submitted to the International Executive Committee (IEC), which is responsible for implementing them and reporting on their implementation.

### Parliamentary Procedure

AIUSA uses *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* for decision-making in both Working Parties and the Voting Plenary. The purposes of these rules are (1) to establish a clear process understood by all; (2) to ensure that all views are fairly represented; and (3) to make decisions as efficiently as possible. A chart of commonly used motions and a guide for the session are attached to this packet.



## Who's Who in Decision-Making and Resolutions Voting Sessions

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The People in the Room:

**Members:** Working parties and voting plenary sessions are internal meetings of AIUSA. Only voting members of AIUSA and authorized delegates of student and local groups may make motions and vote. Participants are asked to come prepared by reading the resolutions packet. They should be respectful of others, willing to voice their opinions, and even more willing to let others voice theirs. Participants should follow the order set by the Chair, asking for information, proposing amendments, or making arguments at the times they are requested. Everyone is asked to remember that it is the clarity of intent that is the goal; amendments should be offered on substance, not form (e.g. grammar).

**Sponsors:** The authors of the resolution at a regional conference. The sponsor usually introduces the resolution and speaks on its behalf at the Regional Conference Working Party. However, when the floor begins consideration of the resolution, the assembled body owns the resolution and not the sponsor. Resolutions at the AGM do not have individual sponsors.

**Resource People:** When there are questions about what AI is already doing on a specific issue, or about the financial or personnel implications of a resolution, there are usually a handful of volunteers, Board members or staff who are best able to provide the answers. When possible, an effort is made to foresee who will be needed in any particular discussion and to have them be present. The Chair should know who these resource people are and be able to call upon them if questions arise.

The People Up Front:

**Chair:** The Chair is an AIUSA member who is well versed in the resolutions process and parliamentary procedure. It is the job of the Chair to make sure that the people in the room know what is going on, keep track of where they are in the process, and ensure that all substantive points are heard while avoiding spending time on

Redundancy and minor grammatical points. A good Chair will make the process clear, keep the discussion moving, and get finished on time. It is not the job of the Chair to direct the outcome of debate on a resolution. The Chair only has authority to rule on points of order. A Working Party or Voting Plenary may have two Chairs, who usually alternate resolutions.

**Rapporteurs:** Rapporteurs are the secretaries of the plenary session. Resolutions are usually displayed on a screen. One Rapporteur works with the LCD display, inserting proposed amendments, so that everyone knows exactly what is being debated. All amendments that pass remain, as does a note as to the final vote. The other Rapporteur sits next to the Chair, keeping detailed notes on the session, including the stated purpose of the resolution, the basic substance of any amendments proposed, and arguments for or against an amendment or the resolution. Precise language of all amendments, as well as the vote tallies on each amendment and on the resolution as a whole, are also noted. After the Working Party or Voting Plenary is over, the Rapporteurs compare notes and make sure that they have an accurate record of the debate and votes. The Chair will approve the final notes and submit the notes and the final resolution language to the National Resolutions Committee.

Working Party Rapporteurs also prepare a brief report to read for the Voting Plenary as each resolution from that Working Party is presented, so the participants know what was considered. The report is a summary of the issues addressed and amendments made to each resolution that passed (including the important amendments that may have failed).

**Runners:** Runners are volunteers who do exactly what their name implies: they run to get whatever material or human resources the Working Party or Voting Plenary requires. This job could entail running to get markers, or tracking down a resource person who needed to answer a point of information. Runners also count votes and report the count to the Chair.

## Definition of Terms in AIUSA Decision-Making Sessions

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**Abstention:** A voter does not vote in favor or against a motion, but still wants that opinion to be recognized. An abstention is not a vote, and hence is not factored either way into the vote results. Abstaining may indicate confusion or disagreement with the procedure on the part of the abstainer.

**AGM (Annual General Meeting):** The principal decision-making body of AIUSA. Resolutions passed by majority vote of AIUSA members present for the voting process determine the general program and policy of AIUSA.

**AIUSA:** Amnesty International of the U.S.A., or the U.S. section of Amnesty International.

**AIUSA Staff:** At the Board's direction, the staff implements AGM and Board decisions, and coordinates the day-to-day work of AIUSA.

**Amendment:** A proposed change to a resolution. This proposed change must be debated and voted upon. If passed, this change will be incorporated into the resolution.

*Note: Amendments to amendments may be proposed, but amendments to amendments to amendments are not allowed.*

*Note: Friendly amendments must be debated and voted upon, unless adopted by unanimous consent.*

**Board of Directors:** Elected by AIUSA members, the Board develops policy and sets priorities for the work of AIUSA. It oversees the implementation of AGM decisions, and makes decision on issues arising between AGMs. If the Board judges a resolution to be contrary to AI's mission or policy, or prohibitive because of financial implications or impossible to implement for other substantial reasons, the resolution may be overturned by a two-thirds vote of the full Board.

**Bylaws:** The document that outlines the purposes and structure of AIUSA.

**Chair / Co-Chairs:** the person(s) who impartially direct the working party or plenary.

A Chair does not offer opinions or take part in debate on any questions. He or she recognizes speakers; rules them out of order (if, for example, someone else is recognized or speaker talks too long, etc.); makes procedural rulings, etc. making sure discussion runs smoothly and that the rules are followed.

**Floor:** The body of people assembled who are participating in the voting plenary or Working Party sessions.

**ICM (International Council Meeting):** The supreme decision-making and governing body of Amnesty International, comprised of representatives from all AI sections and meeting every two years. Resolutions passed by an Amnesty section, which would have international consequences, are considered at the ICM.

**IEC (International Executive Committee):** Elected by the International Council, the Committee supervises the work of Amnesty International. It makes major decisions on issues or international importance that need to be resolved between ICMs. The IEC also oversees implementation of ICM decisions.

**IS (International Secretariat):** The central office (located in London) of AI and staff who coordinate the day-to-day work of AI. They outline overall objectives and strategies for AI actions and develop specific actions. The IS implements the decisions and plans of the ICM and IEC.

**Motion for the Previous Question:** Colloquially referred to as "moving to call the question" or "calling the question." This is a motion for a vote on the last question under consideration (i.e. deciding whether or not it is time to end debate and to vote on an amendment or a resolution). This is not the actual vote on an amendment or resolution. This motion is not debatable.

**Point of Information:** A question asked by someone on the floor to the chair, or through the chair to the relevant person, for relevant information to the question under discussion.

**Point of Order:** A statement, usually made by someone on the floor, to remind the body of a rule or procedure. Chair is called upon to

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make a ruling on this point and to enforce the rules of procedure.

**Resolution:** A formal motion put to the floor in order to be voted upon. A resolution may propose a change in policy, method or organization, directed either at Amnesty International or AIUSA.

**Resolutions Plenary:** See Voting Plenary.

**Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised:** Rules of parliamentary procedure used in the AIUSA Membership Resolutions Process, unless superseded by Standing Rules or the Bylaws.

**Section:** A recognized Amnesty International structure of a particular country, state or territory generally having three or more active groups who participate to some degree in coordinated human rights work.

**Late Resolutions and Non-Binding Resolutions:** A resolution not properly submitted by established resolutions submission deadlines/guidelines and brought to a regional conference or the AGM either during a Working Party or at the Voting Plenary session.

A Late Resolution, which passes a Voting Plenary at a regional conference, will proceed to the AGM with the same status as all properly submitted resolutions.

A Non-Binding resolution brought directly to the AGM and passed at the Voting Plenary session is forwarded to the Board. Such a resolution is advisory only, and is not binding on the Board.

Late and Non-Binding resolutions are subject to a ruling as to whether or not they are in order and can be presented at the conference. A late resolution would be considered in order if it was intended to address an issue emerging after the resolution submission deadline, which cannot wait until the next resolutions cycle. Please see the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process for more details about the criteria for Late Resolutions.

**Standing Rules of the AGM:** A set of regulations guiding the process of decision-making at the AGM, which must adopt these rules at the opening plenary of the AGM in order for them to come into effect. A copy is attached as an appendix to this packet.

**Standing Rules of the MRP (Membership Resolutions Process):** A set of regulations guiding the process of decision-making within the Membership Resolutions Process of AIUSA. A copy of these rules is attached as an appendix to this packet.

**Statute:** The document outlining the goals, methods and structures of Amnesty International. It can only be amended by a two-thirds vote of the ICM.

**Voting Member:** An individual member of AIUSA (one who has paid dues or filed a valid dues waiver to the organization within the past calendar year), or an authorized delegate member of a local or student group who has filed a Group Voting Authorization Form. Voting members will be required to establish their voting eligibility, and will be given a special voting card to use at both working parties and the voting plenary session.

**Voting Plenary:** A meeting of all those attending a regional conference or AGM which reviews the recommendations of working parties (see below), considers further debate and votes to either defeat resolutions or pass them on to the Board of Directors.

**Working Party:** A body that debates resolutions, records its debate and actions taken and prepares a report for the Voting Plenary. A working party can either defeat a resolution or pass it for consideration at the voting plenary session. Because they are more intimate, working parties are traditionally the place for more in depth discussions of, and proposal of amendments to, particular policy issues and resolutions.

## Acronym Guide

**AC** – Area Coordinator

**ACSC** –Area Coordinator Steering Committee

**AMD** – Activism and Membership Development. AIUSA Staff Department.

**AGM** – Annual General Meeting

**AGMPC** – Annual General Meeting Planning/Program Committee.

**AI** – Amnesty International

**AIUSA** – Amnesty International USA. The USA Section of Amnesty International.

**BHR** – Business and human rights; The focus of one of AIUSA's coordination groups

**BRICS** – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa; emerging powers, which along with the US and the EU [European Union], are prioritized for human rights advocacy and membership growth

**CAN** – Corporate Action Network

**CAP** – Country Action Program

**Co-group** – Country Coordination Group, either country or thematically based

**CGSC** – Coordination Group Steering Committee

**GIG** – Global Impact Goals

**HRE** – Human Rights Education.

**ICM** – International Council Meeting.

**IEC** – International Executive Committee. The board elected by delegates at the ICM to supervise the IS and the implementations of ICM decisions.

**IS** – International Secretariat.

**ISP** – Integrated Strategic Plan

**LC** – Legislative Coordinator.

**MAAC** – Multi-Cultural Assessment and Advisory Committee

**MARC** – Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

**MARO** – Mid-Atlantic Regional Office.

**MCOD** – Multi-Cultural Organizational Development Plan

**MRP** – Membership Resolutions Process

**MSP** – Military, Security, and Police Transfers; the focus of one of AIUSA's coordination groups

**MWRC** – Mid-West Regional Conference

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**MWRO** – Mid-West Regional Office.

**NC** – Nominating Committee. Also known as the **NomCom**

**NERC** – Northeast Regional Conference

**NERO** – Northeast Regional Office.

**NRC** – National Resolutions Committee. Also known as the **ResCom**.

**NSYP** – National Student and Youth Program

**NTP** – National Training Program

**NWSA** – National Week of Student Action

**NYAC** – National Youth Advisory Committee

**POC** – Prisoner of Conscience

**PADP** – Program to Abolish the Death Penalty

**RAN** – Regional Action Network

**RC** – Regional Conference

**RO** – Regional Office

**RPG** – Regional Planning Group

**SAC** – Student Area Coordinator

**SDPAC** – State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator

**SFC** – Special Focus Case

**SIF** – Special Initiatives Fund

**SRC** – Southern Regional Conference

**SRO** – Southern Regional Office

**UA** – Urgent Action

**UAN** – Urgent Action Network

**VP** – Voting Plenary session. Part of the Membership Resolutions Process.

**WARN** – Worldwide Accelerated Response Network

**WP** – Working Party. A part of the Membership Resolutions Process.

**WRC** – Western Regional Conference

**WRO** – Western Regional Office

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**STANDING RULES FOR THE AIUSA MEMBERSHIP RESOLUTIONS PROCESS**

*(as amended April 11, 2010)*

1. Controlling Principles
  - A. It is the duty of all those individuals and bodies elected, appointed, established or recognized by these Standing Rules to make the procedures, processes and structure of AIUSA Resolutions Process as accessible, readily understood and friendly as possible.
  - B. The Standing Rules of the Resolutions Process of Amnesty International of the USA, Inc. (“AIUSA”) must be in accord with the Certificate of Incorporation and the bylaws of AIUSA (“Bylaws”).
  
2. National Resolutions Committee (“NRC”)
  - A. The AIUSA Board of Directors (“the Board”), at its summer meeting, shall appoint a National Resolutions Committee (“NRC”) to oversee and manage the Resolutions Process for the coming year:
    - 1) Establish reasonable rules for the resolutions process, to be set forth annually in the Resolutions Guidelines and Submission Form and conveyed to the membership at least 90 days prior to the September 1st resolutions submission deadline (September 15th for students);
    - 2) Assist and prepare the sponsors of all properly submitted Resolutions;
    - 3) Prepare the Resolutions Packets; reword and combine resolutions, provided that the intent of the original resolutions is not altered and the approval of the sponsors is secured for Resolutions at Regional Conferences;
    - 4) Provide the text of properly submitted and Binding Resolutions to members through print and online communications mechanisms, and provide online discussion of resolutions for members;
    - 5) Communicate with regional and AGM staff to coordinate process logistics; to this end, regional representatives shall serve on any regional conference planning committees and/or groups, and the Chair of the NRC on the AGM planning committee;
    - 6) Ensure the bylaws, standing rules, a summary of Robert’s Rules of parliamentary procedures are available to all members, and all properly submitted or Binding Resolutions are provided to all members at conferences;
    - 7) Promote participation in and understanding of the Resolutions Process; provide overview of the resolutions process at the Opening Plenary of each Regional Conference and AGM;
    - 8) Appoint, train and oversee the officers of the Working Parties and Resolutions Plenary;
    - 9) Assign Resolutions to the appropriate Working Parties;
    - 10) Assist the Working Party officers in preparing reports to the Voting Plenary, and ensure that copies of all resolutions passed by the Working Parties are available at the Voting Plenary; and
    - 11) Forward to the general secretary of the Board all resolutions passed by the Regional Conferences and AGM, and reports of deliberations. AGM reports should include status of each resolution, whether binding or non-binding; and if non-binding, whether passed by a Working Party and the Resolutions Plenary, or presented solely to the Resolutions Plenary.
  - B. All resolutions passed in the Regional Conference Resolutions Plenary will be forwarded to the NRC, which shall prepare said resolutions for presentation at the following AGM, unless they are purely regional in their scope.
  
3. Resolutions
  - A. Any registered AIUSA member (individual member or member group) in good standing may sponsor a resolution, except that only individual members may sponsor resolutions to amend the Bylaws. Member groups sponsoring resolutions must designate on the Submission Form their authorized voting member or another individual member of AIUSA to serve as presenter at the Regional Conference.
  - B. Regional Resolutions.
    - 1) There are two (2) categories of resolutions at the Regional Conference: “properly-submitted” resolutions (“Resolutions”) meeting all submission requirements set forth herein and in the Resolution Guidelines and Submission Form and submitted by the September 1st deadline (September 15th for members of student groups), and “late” resolutions not properly submitted (meeting all requirements) by the established submission deadlines
      - a) Only properly-submitted Resolutions will have background prepared by the NRC, be placed in the Resolutions Packet for the Regional Conferences to which they are submitted, and be assigned to Working Parties by the NRC.
      - b) Late resolutions may be presented at the Regional Conference, subject to a determination by the NRC

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Regional Representative that the resolution is in order:

- i. the sponsor/presenter is eligible to vote at the conference;
  - ii. the resolution does not propose an amendment to the Bylaws or these Standing Rules;
  - iii. the resolution is submitted to the NRC Regional Representative on paper and electronically, and the sponsor bears responsibility for providing copies of the resolution text for Working Party participants; and
  - iv. the resolution in question or other resolutions substantially like it have not already been assigned or defeated elsewhere at the same conference.
- c) Late resolutions are intended to address urgent issues that arise after the submissions deadline.
- 2) Resolutions may be submitted to multiple regions.
- 3) All resolutions (whenever submitted) passed by the Resolutions Plenary of any Regional Conference shall be forwarded to the AGM, unless they are purely regional in scope.

### C. AGM Resolutions

- 1) There are two categories of resolutions at the AGM: “Binding Resolutions” which are passed by and forwarded from one or more Regional Conference; and “Non-Binding Resolutions” which have not been passed by a Regional Conference.
- a) Binding Resolutions will be assigned to Working Parties by the NRC prior to the AGM. If passed by the AGM, the resulting decisions shall be binding upon the board, unless overturned by a two-thirds vote of the Board, as provided in the Bylaws.
  - b) Non-Binding Resolutions may be presented by anyone eligible to vote at the AGM. If passed at the AGM, implementation of the resulting decisions will be at the discretion of the Board.
  - c) Non-Binding Resolutions will be assigned by the NRC to Working Parties upon determination by the NRC that they are in order:
    - i. the sponsor meets the requirements for Late Resolutions at Regional Conferences (above);
    - ii. the resolution or one substantively like it was not defeated at a Regional Conference in the same resolutions cycle;
    - iii. the resolution is timely: addresses a human rights issue arising after the Regional Conferences, or AI policy or procedure issues on which volunteer input is necessary and appropriate, arising from the floor of the current conference;
    - iv. the resolution is urgent: addresses an issue that cannot wait until the next resolutions cycle.
  - d) In ICM years, the Board submits ICM resolutions to the NRC for addition to the agenda of a strictly internationally focused Working Party. These resolutions are Non-Binding, but automatically meet the criteria for submission of Non-Binding Resolutions to the AGM articulated in these Standing Rules.

### D. Late or Non-Binding Resolutions determined to be in order by the NRC may be presented at the Regional Conferences or AGM at three points:

- 1) If submitted in writing to the Working Party assigned by the NRC prior to the adoption of the agenda, such resolutions can be presented as amendments and added to the Working Party agenda by majority vote of the Working Party.
- 2) Late and Non-Binding Resolutions may be presented to any Working Party assigned by the NRC for consideration after the Working Party has taken action on all the resolutions on its agenda, and taken up by majority vote of the Working Party.
- 3) Late and Non-Binding Resolutions may be presented at the Resolutions Plenary after action has been taken on all the resolutions passed by the Working Parties, and may be taken up for consideration by majority vote of the Resolutions Plenary.

### E. After action has been taken on all the resolutions passed by the Working Parties, resolutions which fail in a Working Party may be taken up for consideration by 2/3 majority vote of the resolutions plenary.

## 4. Voting

- A. Members are entitled to vote under the Bylaws of AIUSA. Eligible voting members include dues paying members, individuals who have submitted a valid “dues waiver” and those holding valid Group Voting Authorization Forms (one designated voter per member group), in accordance with such criteria and time constraints as the Board shall reasonably establish.
- B. In accordance with the Bylaws, only individual members may vote on Bylaws Amendments.
- C. Voting in Working Parties and Resolutions Plenary sessions at all conferences shall be taken by a show of voting cards clearly labeled “Member” or “Group”. However, only under extraordinary circumstances or to accommodate physical impairment, the chair or chairs may direct a vote to be taken by other means.

## 5. Quorum

- A. In accordance with the Bylaws of AIUSA, a quorum of individuals holding at least one valid voting card (40 at

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Regional Conferences; 100 at the AGM) must be present in order for business to be conducted at any Resolutions Plenary.

- B. It is the duty of the Chair to establish that a quorum is present before opening the Resolutions Plenary.
- C. If a quorum is not present, the Resolutions Plenary may be delayed until a quorum is obtained, or the Resolutions Plenary may be adjourned.
- D. If a Resolutions Plenary is adjourned without a quorum having been attained, no official business is conducted there (except a motion to adjourn or such other motions allowed under Robert's Rules of Order); no resolutions are forwarded from such Regional Conference to the AGM, or from such an AGM to the Board. Business transacted prior to establishing the absence of a quorum shall be valid.
- E. Sponsors of resolutions not considered in a Regional Resolutions Plenary because of lack of quorum may attempt to have their resolutions considered as Late Resolutions at other regional conferences or as Non-Binding Resolutions at the next AGM.

### 6. Working Parties and Resolutions Plenary Sessions

- A. Staff shall provide ample accommodation for Working Parties (which shall be held the day before the Resolutions Plenary) and for the Resolutions Plenary at each conference.
- B. Except as otherwise provided, Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall govern.
- C. Members shall be free to choose which Working Parties or Resolutions Plenary they will attend.
- D. While the Working Parties and Resolutions Plenary are not closed meetings, only eligible voters may propose amendments or propose/second motions.
- E. Members not in attendance at a given Working Party or Resolutions Plenary may participate in the discussion by:
  - 1) Submitting copies of a position paper to be circulated in the Working Party or Resolutions Plenary by another voting member in good standing;
  - 2) Providing a statement no more than 300 words in length to be read aloud during the discussion by a voting member in good standing.
- F. The NRC, in advance of each Regional Conferences and AGM, and in consultation with regional volunteer leaders and staff, shall appoint:
  - 1) A Parliamentarian who shall be provided with copies of the AI Statutes, the Bylaws and Standing Rules of AIUSA, and Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised;
  - 2) The Chairs, Rapporteurs, and Runners of such Working Parties as are necessary, and of the Resolutions Plenary; and
  - 3) Tellers and such assistants as are necessary to secure rapid and accurate counts of votes in the Working Parties and Resolutions Plenary; Runners and Chairs may serve as Tellers.
- G. The voting members present in each Working Party or Resolutions Plenary shall approve the officers appointed to them or elect other officers, which election shall be the first order of business.
- H. The Working Party shall approve or alter the order of the agenda established for the Working Party, which action shall immediately follow the election of officers. The Working Party may not remove from the agenda properly submitted or Binding Resolutions assigned to it by the Resolutions Committee, but may add Late or Non-Binding Resolutions submitted for their consideration.
- I. The Resolutions Plenary shall approve or alter the order of the agenda established for the Resolutions Plenary, which action shall immediately follow the election of officers. The Resolutions Plenary may not remove from the agenda resolutions forwarded to it from the Working Parties or add new Late or Non-Binding Resolutions until after all other business has been conducted.
- J) Drafting Committees may be formed by decision of the Working Party Chair [or by majority vote of the Working Party at regional conferences and the AGM on contentious resolutions. The Working Party Chair appoints a Secretary of the Drafting Committee from attendees of the said Working Party, who is to bring proposed compromise language to the Voting Plenary of the same conference. Resolutions for which Drafting Committees are formed at conferences are not voted upon at the Working Party, but forwarded directly to the Voting Plenary of the same conference at which point compromise language from the Drafting Committee is considered. Drafting Committees can be formed by the NRC between regional conferences and the AGM to bring compromise language to the AGM on contentious resolutions and resolutions which passed more than one regional conference with textual differences. The NRC appoints a Secretary of the Drafting Committee and members of the Drafting Committee from among interested members. The Secretary of the Drafting Committee is responsible for bringing proposed compromise language to the assigned Working Party of the AGM.

### 7. Board of Directors

- A. All AGM decisions (resolutions passed by the AGM Resolutions Plenary) will be forwarded to the Board and



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placed on its agenda.

- B. Binding decisions will be implemented in full and in a timely fashion, unless overridden or amended by two-thirds vote of the Board within one year of passage, as provided by the bylaws; AGM decisions not overturned or amended by the Board within one year of passage may only be overturned/amended through the Resolutions Process as provided by the By-laws.
  - C. AIUSA resolutions that call for the submission of an ICM resolution are placed on the agenda of the Board within one month of passing at least two regional conferences.
  - D. Non-binding decisions will be advisory, and implemented at the Board's discretion.
  - E. The general secretary of the Board or his or her designated representative(s) will:
    - 1) Prepare a summary, updated as necessary, and include it in membership publications and communications, outlining the board's disposition of all AGM decisions including Board amendments and the reasons for them, as well as the Board's progress on implementation; and
    - 2) Serve as the officer to whom members may write for a more extensive written report of the Board's action on any given decision, which designation shall be included in the summary distributed to the membership.
  - F. By each AGM, the Board shall report to the membership on the implementation of the previous year's decisions, and the Board shall report to the membership at the AGM.
8. Amendments to these Standing Rules
- A. Amendments to these Standing Rules may be submitted by any AIUSA member in good standing, in accordance with the rules for submission of resolutions established herein.
  - B. Amendments to these Standing Rules may not be submitted as Late or Non-Binding Resolutions.

# Let's Plenary!

Your guide to the Working Party and Voting Plenary.

**Chair or Co-chairs** will preside over the meeting.  
**Rapporteurs** will take notes and display the resolutions.  
**Runners** will count votes.

**Resolution to be discussed** is displayed on a projection screen, read, and introduced.

**Are there any questions on the resolution?**  
If so, questions will be answered.

**Are there any amendments?**

If you think the resolution should be changed, you can propose an amendment. Please write the amendment on a piece of paper first, before presenting it.

**YES!**

**NO!**

**The Resolution** will be displayed and reread with the Amendment included.

**Questions** on the Amendment will be taken and answered.

**Debate on the Amendment:** People will speak for or against the Amendment. Speak if you have something to say, but try not to repeat another speaker's statement.

**Can we stop talking and vote?** There are two ways to end debate:

1. If debate has slowed or if time is running short, the Chair may ask the body to move to a vote on the amendment.
2. A member may **move the previous question** (call for the question), ending debate and bringing the body to a vote on the amendment. If the motion for the previous question passes, the next step is to vote on the amendment. If it fails, the body moves back to debate.

**Vote on the Amendment:** Votes will be counted by a show of cards. Your vote can be in favor, in opposition, or you can abstain from voting. Leave your card up until all votes are counted. The Chair will announce the results.

**If the Amendment passes,** it becomes a part of the Resolution. If it fails, the resolution is unchanged.

**Are There Any Other Amendments?**

**YES!**

**NO!**

**Debate on the Resolution:** People will speak for or against the resolution. Speak if you have something to say, but try not to repeat another speaker's statement.

**Can we stop talking and vote?** There are two ways to end debate:

1. If debate has slowed or if time is running short, the Chair may ask the body to move to a vote on the resolution.
2. A member may **move the previous question** (call for the question), ending debate and bringing the body to a vote on the resolution. If the motion for the previous question passes, the next step is to vote on the resolution. If it fails, the body moves back to debate.

**Vote on the Resolution:** Votes will be counted by a show of cards. Your vote can be in favor, in opposition, or you can abstain from voting. Leave your card up until all votes are counted. The Chair will announce the results.

**If there are no more resolutions,** the Chair will call the session to a close.

**If there is another Resolution,** go back to the beginning.