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# Amnesty International USA

## Fall 2017 Resolutions Packet Mid-West Regional Conference

October 28, 2017  
Milwaukee, WI

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*NOTE: Background information was drafted by the National Resolutions Committee with input from the resolution's sponsors, members, the Board, and staff.*

**Resolution 1: AIUSA Replacement of Regional Conferences**

**WHEREAS ...**

*WHEREAS the AIUSA Board has undertaken a review of AIUSA governance and of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and regional conferences to ensure that our governance conforms to best practices and increases our human rights impact and that membership meetings primarily support our governance in addition to training, membership-building, programmatic, and campaigning priorities;*

*WHEREAS the Western Regional Conference (WRC), Midwest Regional Conference (MWRC), and Southern Regional Conference (SRC) are held in large geographic regions and generally only draw attendance from members and supporters in relatively close proximity, thus not serving the needs of much of the region's membership;*

*WHEREAS some regional conferences consistently struggle to draw to their voting plenaries even forty (40) members necessary to reach quorum (by previous quorum requirement supplanted by 2017 AGM Decision 1);*

*WHEREAS it will be difficult to have meaningful formal decision-making on resolutions at much smaller, focused meetings;*

*WHEREAS the main purpose of the AGM is governance;*

*WHEREAS regional conferences are expensive endeavors, requiring significant staff time;*

*WHEREAS a mix of regional, sub-regional, and state meetings of members should be member-driven and member-led events focused on the needs of the membership of said meeting;*

*WHEREAS replacing required regional conferences with a mix of regional, sub-regional, and state meetings would allow AIUSA to draw a larger overall attendance;*

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ...**

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that AIUSA will transition away from regional conferences in favor of 'activism conferences' to include a mix of regional, sub-regional, and state meetings beginning in 2018;*

*THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that activism conferences will not include formal decision-making on resolutions, but will still include sessions related to consultation on key international and section-level questions, such as the Strategic Goals, Global Campaigns, and section priorities, etc., when timely; a report of decisions of the previous Annual General Meeting (AGM) and General Assembly (GA); and an overview of decision-making in the section and globally;*

*THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that resolutions will instead be directly submitted to the AGM in accordance with procedures to be promulgated by the National Resolutions Committee (NRC) and in accordance with the Standing Rules of the AGM and the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process;*

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THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AIUSA will appoint members of AIUSA’s non-Board member leaders (such as co-group, Legislative Coordinators (LCs), Area Coordinators/Student Coordinators (ACSC), National Youth Activists Committee (NYAC), (Membership Empowerment Training Project (METP), etc.) within the particular geographic area to lead planning on activism conferences;

*THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AIUSA will undertake a variety of strategies in the selection of a mix of regional, sub-regional, and state meetings and their respective offerings in 2018 as a test of this new approach and report formally to the 2019 AGM on outcomes assessment and recommendations, with a final recommendation on AIUSA’s approach to activism conferences to be submitted via resolution for approval to the 2019 AGM.*

*THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the bylaws are amended accordingly;*

*THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the deadline for submission of resolutions to the AGM will be 60 days prior to the first day of the AGM.*

**Resolution 2: Changes to Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process to Support Replacement of AIUSA Regional Conferences**

**WHEREAS ...**

*WHEREAS in moving away from regional conferences in favor of activism conferences where formal decision-making on resolutions will not take place, the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process will need amending to remove references to regional conference resolutions and provide for the direct submission of resolutions to the AGM;*

*WHEREAS under current rules amendments to the Standing Rules must pass a regional conference and the following AGM to be valid;*

*WHEREAS AIUSA has appointed a Bylaws Review Working Group to review the bylaws and propose amendments in an effort to make them clearer, more accessible, internally consistent, consistent with other AIUSA governance documents (such as the Articles of Incorporation, the Standing Rules of the AGM, and the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process), and consistent with the 2017 ICM governance reform decisions;*

*WHEREAS the Bylaws Review Working Group envisions this undertaking to continue through the 2019 AGM it was not possible to submit a full revision to the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process and the Standing Rules of the AGM by the September 1, 2017 resolutions submission deadline;*

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ...**

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that AIUSA adopts the following changes to the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process, as interim amendments to ensure current Standing Rules for the 2019 AGM:*

1. §2, A, 1: Strike “September 1st” and “(September 15th for students)”;
2. §2, A, 2: Strike “for Resolutions at Regional Conferences”;
3. §2, A, 5: Strike “with regional and” and replace “regional representatives shall serve on any regional conference planning committees and/or groups, and the Chair of the NRC on the AGM planning committee;” with “the Chair of the NRC shall serve on the AGM planning committee”;
4. §2, A, 12: Strike “Regional Conferences and”;
5. §2, B: Strike;
6. §3, A: Strike “at the Regional Conference”;
7. §3, B: Strike;
8. §3, C, 1: Replace “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.” with “There are two categories of resolutions at the AGM: “Binding Resolutions” which are resolutions properly submitted to the NRC by the deadline for submissions of resolutions to the AGM; and “Non -Binding Resolutions” which have not been submitted by the AGM resolutions submission deadline.”;
9. §3, C, 1(d): Strike;

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10. §3, D: Strike “Late or” and “Regional Conferences or”;
11. §3, D, 2: Strike “Late and”;
12. §3, D, 3: Strike “Late and”;
13. §3, E: Strike “Late and” and “Regional Conferences or”;
14. §5, A: Strike “(40 at Regional Conferences; 100 at the AGM)”;
15. §5, D: Strike “no resolutions are forwarded from such Regional Conference to the AGM, or from such an AGM to the Board”;
16. §5, E: Strike;
17. §6, F: Strike “Regional Conferences and” and “regional”;
18. §6, H: Strike “Late or”;
19. §6, I: Strike “Late or”;
20. §6, J: Strike “regional conferences and” and “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.”;
21. §7, C: Strike;
22. §8, B: Strike “Late or”

*THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all references in the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process to the ICM shall be replaced by the General Assembly (GA);*

*THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the AIUSA Board will submit a full revision of the Standing Rules of the Membership Resolutions Process and Standing Rules of the AGM, likely combining the two, to the 2019 AGM.*

## **Background for Resolutions 1 and 2**

Resolution 1 asks that AIUSA replace regional conferences with activism conferences that could occur at the regional, sub-regional, and state levels. It further asks that the resolutions process be decoupled from regional conferences and occur at the AIUSA Annual General Meetings (AGM). Resolution 2 specifies the changes that would be necessary to the *Standing Rules of Membership Resolutions* to support the replacement of regional conferences. These two resolutions are sponsored by the AIUSA Board and based on recent reviews of AIUSA best practices and suggestions for change from both external and internal analyses of governance.

AIUSA is a grassroots, member-led organization that prioritizes membership engagement in its democratic decision-making processes, primarily through regional representation. AIUSA created regions with regional offices in the late 1970s to more accurately and democratically represent AIUSA members. AIUSA currently recognizes five regions: 1) West, 2) Mid-west, 3) Northeast, 4) Mid-Atlantic, and 5) South. Regional offices represent members by region, conduct regional field organizing and membership mobilization, and plan annual regional conferences. Since the 1990s regional conferences have regularly incorporated governance elements, such as the resolutions process.

AIUSA supports a democratic decision-making process of its members through the resolutions process. The current resolutions process, facilitated by AIUSA's National Resolutions Committee (NRC), allows members to write resolutions that suggest change to AIUSA or AI policy that are first presented to regional conferences, debated and voted upon and, if approved, then sent on to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the spring for final debate and vote. If the resolution is approved at the AGM, it is the AIUSA Board's responsibility to implement the resolution, submit a resolution to the international movement's General Assembly if applicable, or overturn it.

In recent years AIUSA has experienced some challenges to the way that it conducts member engagement through regional representation and conferences, including limited attendance at conferences and lack of ability to achieve quorum in resolutions voting plenary sessions. Between 2015 and 2017 attendance at Regional Conferences ranged from a low of 100 (in the South in 2015) to 552 (in the Northeast in 2016). In some cases, a conference did not meet quorum requirements at the voting plenary and official votes on resolutions could not occur. To address the problem of not meeting quorum a successful resolution in 2016-2017 lowered the required quorum number to a minimum of 12% of the pre-registered voting members at regional conferences and 15% of the pre-registered voting members at the AGM (replacing the minimum requirement of 40 at regional conferences, and 100 at the AGM).

If this resolution passes, the AIUSA Board will allow experimentation on future conferences, with 2018 being the first year of experimentation with activism conferences. Working groups, regional offices, and volunteers will plan these conferences.

### **Arguments in Favor**

One argument in favor of this resolution is that the regional conferences do not adequately support member engagement in the governance process, as the recent external report, commissioned by AIUSA Board of Directors, concluded. Very few people actually attend the voting plenary even if they have attended a regional conference (only 16% of conference attendees voted in voting plenaries in 2016), and it is sometimes difficult to get enough people in the room to get a quorum. Further, regional conferences are often attended by members in the specific vicinity of the conference, rather than by members representing the whole region.

Second, regional conferences are costly endeavors, costing up to \$200,000 per year and taking up a large amount of staff time for planning. Spending such time and resources on regional conferences rather than other human rights work, may be detrimental to AIUSA's human rights agenda and goals. Replacing the regional conferences with smaller, more human rights focused conferences or events would increase AIUSA's impact by allowing staff and members to focus on human rights issues, by encouraging more local organizing and activism, and by more efficiently spending time and resources.

Third, the regional conference model is an old model (started in the 1970s and 80s) that does not work well in today's globalized, technological world. Supporting conference based on human rights themes and activism rather than geography would benefit AIUSA's members. Moving to a model led by members addressing local activism desires could have a better effect on improving the quality of the human rights work in the entire region over the long-term. Allowing each region to tailor the conferences within their jurisdiction might increase attendance and interest in our human rights cause.

Fourth, the regional conference model may no longer be relevant as a way to represent members' interests. Some conferences have low attendance and most have difficulty engaging members in the resolutions process.

Fifth, AIUSA should consider changes to its governance process to more accurately meet the needs of its members, encourage member engagement in the decision-making process, and reflect best practices that are followed by other AI Sections. Almost all other AI Sections follow the model of incorporating resolutions into one nation-wide conference.

Sixth, changing this model could actually increase membership engagement in governance processes rather than decrease it, including youth members. State activism conferences could have sessions devoted to developing resolutions that would go on to the AGM and that could increase participation in grassroots interest in governance.



## **Arguments Against**

One argument against this resolution is that it could possibly dampen membership engagement and could significantly limit the ability of members to meet and to become involved in the governance process. This change would represent a downsizing of governance for AIUSA and go directly against the ideals of the democratic process that AIUSA holds so dear. Though regional conferences may be expensive in cost, staff time, and resources, they do generate enthusiasm for membership engagement in the governance process and in AIUSA's work.

Second, this change could mean that youth are not as engaged in conferences or AIUSA activism. Youth members, in particular, may not be able to afford to attend the AGM and would be almost entirely cut out from issues of governance. Many students are introduced to AIUSA and its governance process for the first and only time at the regional conferences – reducing their chance to attend could have long-term negative consequences for youth mobilization and AIUSA membership.

Third, staff time spent on organizing meetings might actually increase, as more meetings would have to be organized. Because AIUSA has relied on the regional conference model for decades it would be difficult to switch to a new model in such a short time and staff would need to teach, engage, and mobilize local and state-level organization. Pushing the burden of organizing conferences away from staff and on to volunteers may even make conference organization and mobilization less likely.

Fourth, low attendance and membership engagement should be addressed in other ways than getting rid of regional conferences altogether.

Fifth, focusing the AGM solely on governance and removing governance from regional conferences could mean limiting AIUSA's democratic process and disenfranchising members. Limiting governance to the AGM would cut off a large number of members who typically engage in the resolutions at each of the regional conferences. Further, limiting governance to the AGM could allow for some individual members to have more power in the types of resolutions that they put forward at the AGM since fewer members would be able to debate and vote on resolutions.

Sixth, changing the regional conference model without having a plan in place for the future of AIUSA conferences could jeopardize membership engagement for years to come. This resolution only states that the Board of Directors will “undertake a variety of strategies” in replacing regional conferences. A better solution would be to continue with the regional conferences while exploring other options (like activism conferences), reporting back to the membership on the results, and then making the decision as to whether or not to replace regional conferences after monitoring and evaluation has been undertaken on a new model.

### **Resource Implications**

**Regional Conference Cost:** Regional conferences cost AIUSA approximately \$200,000 annually in direct cost and staff time (total cost of regional conferences was \$217,000 in 2015 and just over \$185,000 in 2016 (Governance Review Report). The 2017 regional conference budget is \$85,000 for one-day conferences in each region – projected budget for smaller, activism conferences in 2018 would be similar to that of 2017.

**Individual Member Impact:** Individual members would likely spend less in order to attend smaller conferences.

**Staff Time and Cost:** This resolution should decrease staff time devoted to conference prep in the long run. During the first year however, staff time working on transitioning to activism conferences may in fact go up as regions get organized for the new structure. Based on time investment, staff costs were estimated to be \$99,500 in 2016. Smaller conferences would reduce expenses, such as fees to pay for hotels or other meeting places.

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

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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 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 Resolutions Voting Sessions

## 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 Electronic File 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.

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### 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 of 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 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.

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**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, now  
called the International Board. 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** – Multicultural 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

**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



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**RO** – Regional Office

**UA** – Urgent Action

**RPG** – Regional Planning Group

**UAN** – Urgent Action Network

**SAC** – Student Area Coordinator

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

**SDPAC** – State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator

**WARN** – Worldwide Accelerated Response Network

**SFC** – Special Focus Case

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

**SIF** – Special Initiatives Fund

**WRC** – Western Regional Conference

**SRC** – Southern Regional Conference

**WRO** – Western Regional Office

**SRO** – Southern Regional Office

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

*(as amended September 10, 2016)*

**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

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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 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;
    - 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.
- 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.

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### 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 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 out of order if 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 every such Conference.
  - e) If the resolution is not ruled out of order pursuant to paragraph (d), then the NRC will determine that a Non-Binding resolution is in order if
    - i. 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
    - ii. the resolution is urgent, meaning that it addresses an issue that cannot wait until the next resolutions cycle.
  - f) 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. 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.

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- F. 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 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.

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- 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

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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 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. Binding AGM decisions requiring an ICM resolution submission for implementation shall be submitted to the international movement by the Board on behalf of AIUSA.
- E. Non-binding decisions will be placed on the Board agenda and either implemented, or overturned by a simple majority of the Board.
- F. Resolutions submitted to the ICM, which originate with the Board, are submitted as resolutions in the AIUSA Membership Resolutions Process.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.