



Human Rights on Capitol Hill

November 30, 2017

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(1) **Rohingya Crisis: Secretary Tillerson condemns Myanmar military’s atrocities against the Rohingya as [ethnic cleansing](#), but Congress needs to pass legislation to ensure that military leaders are held accountable.** On November 15 Secretary Tillerson concluded his Myanmar visit by condemning the Myanmar military’s “horrendous atrocities” against the Rohingya, announcing additional 47 million dollars in humanitarian aid, and calling for a credible probe into the military’s attacks. Amnesty International (“AI”) welcomes the much-needed increase in humanitarian aid and the Secretary’s strong statements condemning the Myanmar military’s ethnic cleansing campaign. However, in order for any probe to be credible, it cannot be conducted by Myanmar authorities, but must be conducted by the United Nations

(“UN”) Fact-Finding Mission. Since 2016, Myanmar has refused to provide unfettered access to the UN, other independent observers, and humanitarian aid groups. By denying access to northern Rakhine state, Myanmar continues to obstruct any credible impartial investigation into human rights violations committed by all sides.

AI has joined a [coalition of 58 NGOs](#) calling for targeted sanctions against senior Myanmar military leaders. We [urge Congress](#) to pass bipartisan legislation that has been introduced in both the [House \(H.R. 4223\)](#) and [Senate \(S. 2060\)](#) which would significantly increase pressure on Myanmar military leaders to halt the atrocities and crimes against humanity against the Rohingya. We also urge the House to quickly pass a [bipartisan resolution](#) (H. Con. Res. 90) that was unanimously approved by the Foreign Affairs Committee. The resolution condemns the Myanmar military’s atrocities against the Rohingya which include summary executions, mass burnings, and group rape.

(2) Philippines: President Trump concludes Asia trip with no criticism of President Duterte’s national campaign of extrajudicial killings against the poor.

In advance of President Trump’s November trip to Asia, AI wrote a [letter](#) to the White House, setting out the top human rights priorities that the U.S. delegation should raise and press during their meetings in Asia.

- a) Calling on the US government to impose a comprehensive arms embargo and targeted financial sanctions against senior Myanmar military officials responsible for crimes against humanity.
- b) President Duterte must halt extrajudicial killings being executed in name of “war on drugs.”
- c) The escalating number of death threats, defamation campaigns, imprisonment and attacks against human rights defenders in China, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

(3) The President failed to deliver on any of these priorities. In particular, President Trump failed to criticize the Philippine President’s national campaign of extrajudicial killings being executed as part of his anti-drug war. President Duterte’s “war on drugs” has exacted a

devastating human rights toll resulting in more than 7,000 extrajudicial killings, death threats against critics, and the jailing of opposition Senator Leila de Lima on politically motivated charges. In advance of [President Trump’s bilateral meeting with President Duterte](#), Joanne Lin, National Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs, wrote a [blog](#) calling on President Duterte to end the extrajudicial killings, impunity for police abuses, and attacks on human rights defenders. On November 13, she was featured on MSNBC detailing the human rights crisis.



(4) **Chechnya: Senate Passes Resolution Condemning Persecution of LGBT people.** On October 30 [the Senate unanimously passed](#) S. Res. 211, condemning the government of Chechnya’s detention and torture of over 100 gay men in 2017. [The resolution](#), spearheaded by Senators Toomey (R-PA) and Markey (D-MA), calls on Russia to investigate these crimes in Chechnya and to hold accountable those involved in perpetrating these abuses. The resolution also calls on the U.S. government to demand the release of those wrongfully detained. Just days after the passage of the resolution, [Russian authorities vowed](#) to investigate these allegations of abuse. While

there remain serious questions about the impartiality of the proposed investigation, the announcement underscores the power of Congress speaking out on human rights issues.

- (5) **Africa: Amnesty International speaks out against the United States' use of Lethal Force in Africa.** Following news reports that President Trump has loosened restrictions on the use of drones and commando raids outside war zones, Amnesty International urged the administration to ensure that the United States' use of lethal force complies with international human rights and humanitarian law. In opinion pieces for [The Hill](#) and [Newsweek](#), Daphne Eviatar, our Director of Security and Human Rights, warned that the proposed new policy would violate international law and urged Congress to ensure that the administration undertakes independent investigations of any potentially unlawful strikes.
- (6) **DRC: Ending the Trade in Conflict Minerals:** On November 14 the House Financial Services Committee approved H.R. 4248 on party lines. [AI opposes](#) the bill which would strike the Conflict Minerals provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act. These provisions require companies to track whether materials used in their products comes from conflict areas in the DRC. The DRC has been wracked by violence for years fueled by the trade in several natural resources including tin, tungsten, gold, and tantalum. The Conflict Minerals provisions are critical to ensuring that companies do their part to avoid fueling conflict or human rights abuses through their supply chain practices. AI will continue to press Congress not to pass H.R. 4248.

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