



December 6, 2017

On International Human Rights Day, Amnesty International USA Urges Congress to Protect Human Rights by Taking the Following Actions.

Dear Member of Congress:

December 10 marks the annual celebration of International Human Rights Day – the day in 1948 when the U.N. General Assembly adopted the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). Through the signing of this declaration, the United States has committed to protecting human rights, both at home and worldwide, for nearly 70 years.

On this International Human Rights Day, Amnesty International USA (“AIUSA”) urges Congress to take concrete action to protect human rights. Now, more than ever before, the international community is looking to Congress to preserve the United States’ longstanding leadership on international human rights issues including protecting refugees and defending human rights activists. At a time when countries throughout the world are committing extrajudicial killings and imprisoning human rights defenders with impunity, Congress needs to speak out against human rights abuses and ensure that no U.S. aid goes toward the commission of abuses. At a time when the number of displaced people has soared to the highest levels since World War II, the U.S. must increase humanitarian aid in order to aid vulnerable people fleeing persecution and torture. Congress has a vital role to play. AIUSA urges you to:

1. **Support bipartisan legislation to aid Myanmar’s displaced Rohingya population fleeing ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity.** Since late August, more than 620,000 Rohingya have poured into Bangladesh, fleeing summary executions, mass burnings, and systematic rape being committed by Myanmar security forces. That’s comparable to the entire population of Washington, D.C. on the run, fleeing for their lives. Secretary of State Tillerson and a congressional delegation visited Myanmar in November. The Secretary has described the atrocities as “horrific,” rising to the level of “ethnic cleansing.” Lawmakers have introduced bipartisan legislation aimed at pressuring the Myanmar military to halt the atrocities. AIUSA urges Congress to pass the following bills and resolutions without delay:
 - a. BURMA Human Rights and Freedom Act of 2017 (S. 2060)
 - b. Burma Act of 2017 (H.R. 4223)
 - c. H. Con. Res. 90

2. **Increase humanitarian aid** for refugees and displaced persons worldwide including:
 - a. **Syria:** is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, with over five million people who have fled to Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and beyond. Over 13 million are displaced inside Syria. As the civil war heads into its eighth year with no end in sight, the U.S. must increase humanitarian support and protection.
 - b. **South Sudan:** Since December 2013, armed conflict has driven nearly four million people from their homes. More than two million have fled to neighboring countries in a desperate bid to reach safety while nearly two million are internally displaced inside South Sudan.
 - c. **Yemen:** A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding as millions have fled their homes to escape the devastating conflict. More than 20 million now need humanitarian assistance.
 - d. **Iraq:** Since 2013, more than three million Iraqis have been displaced, and nearly 220,000 have fled as refugees to other countries. Mass executions, systematic rape, and horrendous acts of violence are widespread. The UN Refugee Agency estimates over 11 million Iraqis need humanitarian assistance.
 - e. **Lake Chad basin:** The Boko Haram insurgency has displaced over 2.3 million people in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Amnesty International has documented widespread sexual violence, suicide bombings, and other grave human rights violations. Hunger and malnutrition have risen to critical levels in all four countries in the Lake Chad basin. Nearly 11 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

3. **Adopt and champion an Amnesty International human rights defender (“HRD”).** The critical and often dangerous work of human rights advocacy is spearheaded each day by individuals around the world. Many suffer cruelly for having the courage of their convictions – suffering imprisonment, torture, even death. HRDs must be allowed to do their work safely in order to guarantee a secure, stable society with fundamental freedoms for all. International Human Rights Day is the perfect time to issue a statement or deliver a floor speech on behalf of these HRDs:
 - a. **Taner and the Istanbul 10 (Turkey):** The Chair and Director of Amnesty International (AI) Turkey, along with nine other human rights defenders, have been arrested and charged with “membership in an armed terrorist organization.” The Chair of AI Turkey, Taner Kilic, has been imprisoned since June 2017. The Director of AI Turkey, Idil Eser, and nine other peaceful activists, including the original founder of AI Turkey, have been released on bail, but each still faces up to 15 years in prison on this baseless charge. The persecution of Taner and the Istanbul 10 is the latest in the Turkish government’s massive crackdown on civil society with the intent to stifle dissent and silence critics. Their next trial date is January 31, 2018. Congress should call on the Turkey Minister of Justice to immediately drop the charges against the 11 peaceful activists and ensure their unconditional release.
 - b. **Hanan Badr El-Din (Egypt):** Hanan Badr el-Din became an HRD following the enforced disappearance of her husband Khalid Ezz el-Din. Hanan’s determination to find her husband led her to establish the Coalition of Families of the Forcibly Disappeared, a leading voice in the search for Egypt’s disappeared. In May 2017

- Egyptian authorities arrested her and have charged her with belonging to a banned group. If convicted, she could be sentenced to at least five years in prison.
- c. **Tadjadine Mahamat Babouri “Mahadine”** (Chad): An online activist arrested for criticizing the Chadian government via Facebook, he has been jailed and tortured, and is in desperate need of medical care. Amnesty International is urging Chadian authorities to immediately release Tadjedine Mahamat Babouri and pending his release, to transfer him to the Am Sinene prison where he can receive adequate medical care.
 - d. **MILPAH** (Honduras): MILPAH, the Indigenous Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz, is leading a fight against huge hydro-electric and mining interests that threaten to exploit their land. MILPAH activists are subject to death threats and physical assaults. Amnesty International is calling on Honduran authorities to take all appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of MILPAH members.
 - e. **Xulhaz Mannan** (Bangladesh): In April 2016 LGBTIQ activist Xulhaz Mannan brutally killed in what experts believe was a meticulously planned attack by individuals belonging to Ansar al-Islam, a Bangladeshi armed Islamist group. Xulhaz was a founder of Bangladesh’s only magazine dedicated to LGBTIQ issues. In Bangladesh same-sex relations are illegal. More than 18 months following his murder, Bangladeshi authorities have failed to investigate his murder. Amnesty International is pressing the Bangladeshi authorities to ensure that the brutal murder of Xulhaz Mannan is duly investigated and the perpetrators are arrested are brought to justice in proceedings that meet international fair trial standards, without recourse to the death penalty.

Thank you in advance for your support in protecting human rights worldwide. Please do not hesitate to contact me at jlin@aiusa.org or 202/509-8151.

Sincerely,

Joanne Lin
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Advocacy and Government Affairs