



Human Rights on Capitol Hill

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HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES

(1) **SENATORS MUST VIGOROUSLY PROBE POMPEO'S [ALARMING HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD](#) AND PRESS HIM TO PROTECT ALL HUMAN RIGHTS:** The Pompeo nomination has rung alarm bells among human rights advocates around the world and raises serious concerns about the United States' commitment, or lack thereof, to human rights. All Senators must [conduct a vigorous probe anew](#) of Pompeo's human rights record on torture, indefinite detention, refugees, Muslims, LGBTI communities, and reproductive rights. As the nation's top diplomat and the head of the State Department, the Secretary of State oversees bureaus charged with protecting and resettling refugees, investigating war crimes and genocide, fighting gender-based violence, and reporting on human rights abuses. Senators must press Pompeo to publicly commit to protecting the rights of all people.

(2) **SENATE SHOULD NOT CONFIRM GINA HASPEL AS CIA DIRECTOR UNLESS** DOJ opens a criminal investigation into her alleged role in torture, other human rights violations, destruction of evidence of torture, AND any information of her involvement in human rights violations is declassified and publicly released. If there is admissible evidence of her involvement in



crimes under international law, she should be brought to trial, not handed a promotion to lead the CIA.

(3) AFRICA: AIUSA WELCOMES HOUSE PASSAGE OF ETHIOPIA RESOLUTION.

AIUSA [welcomes](#) House passage of H. Res. [128](#) which calls on the State Department and USAID to take specific actions to aid the Ethiopian people so they can exercise their constitutional rights. The House passed the resolution after years of brutal repression by the Ethiopian government which included two states of [emergency](#), nearly 30,000 arrests and detentions, over 1000 deaths, and numerous reports of torture and extrajudicial killings. The resolution lays out key benchmarks for [human rights reforms](#). AIUSA urges the Senate to pass H. Res. 128.

(4) AMERICAS: CONGRESS SHOULD NOT FUND BORDER WALL, BORDER PATROL EXPANSION, OR BORDER OPERATIONS THAT VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS.

The Homeland Security Customs Border Protection (“CBP”) Fiscal Year 2019 (“FY19”) budget includes requests to expand the border patrol and to build additional southwest border barriers. AIUSA is [urging](#) Congress not to appropriate any funds for purported “border security measures” that would violate the rights of people seeking humanitarian protection, of residents living in border communities, and of Native American Nations in the southwest border region. At a minimum, Congress should not appropriate any funds to support the work of CBP or border patrol agents, without establishing rigorous external oversight and accountability mechanisms over the conduct of CBP and border patrol agents.

(5) AMERICAS: CONGRESS SHOULD DRAMATICALLY INCREASE FUNDING FOR U.S. IMMIGRATION COURTS IN ORDER TO TACKLE THE MULTI-YEAR BACKLOGS THAT DELAY ADJUDICATION OF ASYLUM CASES.

Congress’s longtime failure to provide adequate funding and resources for the immigration courts has resulted in multi-year court backlogs that drag out cases and delay adjudication of asylum claims. AIUSA [urges](#) Congress to dramatically increase funding to support the expansion of immigration judge teams that can hear asylum and humanitarian cases in a timely manner.



(6) **AMERICAS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE LEADERS ATTENDING SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS TO TACKLE ROOT CAUSES OF THE AMERICAS' REFUGEE AND HUMAN RIGHTS CRISES.** In mid-April heads of state in the Western Hemisphere met in Peru for the [Eighth Summit of the Americas](#). In an [open letter](#) to heads of state and in a [statement](#) to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Amnesty International urged leaders to address the refugee crises in Venezuela and Central America, the attacks on human rights defenders and indigenous peoples, and the excessive use of force against protesters across the Americas.

(7) **MID EAST: NEW U.S.-SAUDI ARMS DEAL RISKS TRAMPLING HUMAN RIGHTS:** In March the Saudi Crown Prince and President Trump finalized a new \$12.5 billion arms sale. AIUSA has called on the U.S. government to [stop supplying arms to the Saudi-led coalition](#). Saudi Arabia is leading a Coalition of Gulf states in a war in Yemen that has lasted for three years and has caused what the United Nations calls the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. [U.S.-manufactured arms](#) have already been used in strikes against Yemeni civilians, and 60 percent of civilian deaths are due to the Saudi-led Coalition. By finalizing this arms deal, the U.S. is at risk of being complicit in war crimes.

(8) **OMNIBUS: HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT OF OMNIBUS SPENDING BILL PASSED IN MARCH:** Tucked into the \$1 trillion spending bill passed by Congress are several provisions that will have major human rights impact:

a. *Human Rights Defenders:* The CLOUD Act, folded into the omnibus spending bill, will endanger human rights defenders worldwide. The CLOUD Act will permit nations to enter into bilateral agreements with the U.S. so they can receive data directly from U.S. technology providers, without any additional scrutiny by a U.S. judge or official. This means that foreign governments will be able to directly access sensitive data through which they can target local human rights defenders on the basis of their activism or their identity.

b. *Gun Violence:* The omnibus spending bill included provisions to improve reporting to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, and clarified that the Centers for Disease Control is not barred from researching gun violence. While AIUSA welcomes these long-overdue



reforms, they remain woefully insufficient for addressing the nationwide gun violence crisis.

Congress can and must do much more including funding gun violence research and prevention, passing universal background check requirements, and passing a [range of other common sense, human rights-based reforms](#).

c. *Children and families seeking humanitarian protection in the U.S.*: The omnibus bill included an additional \$1.6 billion for border security and \$641 million for new border fencing. AIUSA strongly opposes Congress’s increased funding for the President’s border wall which [violates U.S. human rights obligations](#). A border wall will endanger people seeking humanitarian protection, and threaten the livelihoods of Native American Nations who live in the southwest border region.

d. *Refugees*: In the omnibus bill Congress largely rejected the President’s drastic cuts to the international affairs budget, but the final FY18 budget still fell \$3.4 billion short of FY17 spending levels. Most disturbing was a significant reduction in U.S. contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (“UNRWA”) -- from \$125 million to \$65 million. This drastic cut will have devastating effects on Palestinian refugees who depend on UNRWA for life-sustaining services. AIUSA is urging Congress to maintain robust humanitarian aid for refugees and displaced peoples worldwide in FY19.

(9) USA: AIUSA ACTIVISTS JOIN MARCH FOR OUR LIVES: On March 24 AIUSA activists gathered in DC to join in the March for Our Lives, to push Congress to enact gun control reform. AIUSA activists across the country joined protests in California, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Washington State. Together with AIUSA Executive Director Margaret Huang, who penned this [op-ed](#) for NBC, AIUSA activists are demanding that Congress address this human rights crisis by passing legislation to reduce gun violence.



What's Coming Down the Pike on the Human Rights Front?

AFRICA: AIUSA AFRICA ADVOCACY DIRECTOR TO TESTIFY AT LANTOS

COMMISSION HEARING ON CAMEROON: On April 27 AIUSA Africa Advocacy Director, Adotei Akwei, will testify before the [Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission](#) on human rights developments in Cameroon.



EURASIA: AIUSA EURASIA ADVOCACY DIRECTOR TO SPEAK AT SENATE HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS BRIEFING ON TURKEY: On May 16 AIUSA Eurasia Advocacy Director, Daniel Balson, will speak at a [Senate Human Rights Caucus](#) briefing on Turkey. Turkey is the [global leader in journalist incarceration](#), according to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) which tracks press freedom violations worldwide. In addition, in summer 2017 Turkish authorities arrested and detained (“AI”) Turkey Country Director Idil Eser and AI Turkey Board Chair Taner Kilic. Turkey continues to jail Mr. Kilic as he awaits trial.

The event will be co-sponsored by Senators Tillis (R-NC) and Coons (D-DE), co-chairs of the Human Rights Caucus.

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