



Human Rights on Capitol Hill

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Human Rights Updates

- (1) **STATE DEPARTMENT (“DOS”): UNDER TRUMP ADMINISTRATION, DOS PUBLISHES ANNUAL REPORT THAT GUTS REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ANALYSIS AND WINNOWS SCOPE OF STATE-OBLIGATED HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS:** On April 20 DOS issued the [2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#). The 2017 report represents laudable work by DOS Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and U.S. embassies around the world. However, unlike prior reports, the 2017 report reflects an unprecedented, alarming level of editing by the Trump administration in a manner that [undermines the overall integrity and credibility of the report](#). The 2017 report struck major passages on sexual and reproductive rights and narrowed the analysis to forced abortion, involuntary sterilization, or other coercive population control methods. The report also removed major sections that documented women’s rights, LGBTI rights, and other rights to non-discrimination – thereby largely ignoring the obligations of nations to **fulfill** people’s rights. The report also [misquoted Amnesty International’s research on the U.S.-backed Saudi bombing campaign in the Yemeni civil war](#) and changed DOS’s longstanding reference [regarding](#) the Occupied Palestinian Territories to “Golan Heights, West Bank, and Gaza.”
- (2) **NOMINATIONS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES PRESIDENT TO WITHDRAW GINA HASPEL’S NOMINATION FOR CIA DIRECTOR:** Amnesty has [called](#) on the Trump administration to withdraw Haspel’s nomination and investigate the allegations that she participated in torture and the destruction of evidence. The evidence should be declassified and made public. If the allegations are true, Haspel is not suitable to lead the CIA. Senators should not support her nomination unless a complete and public investigation of her role in CIA torture and so-called “enhanced interrogation” is completed.



- (3) **WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO SECURE RELEASE OF JAILED REUTERS JOURNALISTS IN MYANMAR:** On May 3, World Press Freedom Day, Amnesty International launched a campaign to secure the release of jailed Reuters journalists in Myanmar. At the time of their arrest in December 2017, the journalists [Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo](#) were investigating the Myanmar military’s brutal crackdown of the Rohingya minority. Senators Durbin, Rubio, Coons, Cruz, Kaine, Young, Markey, Merkley, and Feinstein sent a [solidarity letter](#) to the unjustly jailed journalists.



- (4) **ROHINGYA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES ADDITIONAL HUMANITARIAN AID FOR ROHINGYA FLEEING MYANMAR MILITARY ATROCITIES IN RAKHINE STATE:** On April 23 DOS [announced](#) an additional \$50 million in humanitarian aid for Rohingya fleeing northern Rakhine State in Myanmar. This brings the United States' response to the Rohingya crisis to more than \$163 million since August 2017. The humanitarian aid reflects strong bipartisan support from Congress. Amnesty International's [top advocacy priorities](#) are to protect the Rohingya refugees and to press Myanmar authorities to halt the atrocities.
- (5) **APPROPRIATIONS: CONGRESS SHOULD PROVIDE ROBUST HUMANITARIAN AID TO REFUGEES, AND REFUSE TO FUND THE PRESIDENT'S BORDER WALL.** Here are [Amnesty International's appropriations priorities for Fiscal Year 2019 \("FY19"\)](#) which include: robust humanitarian aid for refugees worldwide and robust support for the essential tools of diplomacy and the human rights functions within the DOS and USAID top-line accounts. In addition, Congress should refuse to fund the President's border wall and reject requests to increase border personnel. The U.S. has international legal obligations to provide a fair and accessible asylum process for people fleeing persecution and torture.
- (6) **U.S. IMMIGRATION: CONGRESS MUST INCREASE FUNDING FOR IMMIGRATION JUDGE ("IJ") TEAMS AND THE LEGAL ORIENTATION PROGRAM ("LOP"):** The immigration courts have been under-resourced for many years, resulting in backlogs that force many asylum seekers to wait years for their cases to be heard by an IJ. In 2018 this backlog has reached record-high levels with nearly 700,000 cases pending. Amnesty International [urges Congress](#) to increase funding for IJ teams and LOP, both which are essential to providing a fair and accessible asylum for people fleeing persecution and torture.
- (7) **AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE ("AUMF"): AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OPPOSES NEWLY PROPOSED OPEN-ENDED WAR AUTHORITY FOR THE PRESIDENT.** A proposed new AUMF bill, introduced by Senators Corker (R-TN) and Kaine (D-VA), would hand the President a blank check to wage a limitless global war against unspecified armed groups around the world. In a recent [statement](#) Amnesty International urges Congress to oppose such a dangerous and expansive war authorization which could [undermine and violate international law](#).

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

TURKEY: EURASIA ADVOCACY DIRECTOR TO SPEAK AT SENATE HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS BRIEFING: On May 16 Amnesty 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. The briefing will cover the threats facing human rights and religious freedom in Turkey. 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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REFUGEES: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HILL BRIEFING ON WORLD REFUGEE TRENDS: In mid-June Amnesty International will present a Hill briefing on refugee trends and developments around the world. Be on the lookout for more details later this month!

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