



May 22, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Amnesty International USA Appropriations Priorities for Fiscal Year 2019

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA (“AIUSA”), and our two million members and activists in all 50 states, we call on you to ensure that the U.S. Government advocates for the fundamental human rights of all, throughout the world, as you begin your tenure as Secretary of State.

We urge you to use your power as Secretary to speak out for human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience, protect the vital importance of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (“USRAP”), re-open the offices within the State Department (“DOS”) specifically dedicated to transferring detainees that have been cleared by national security agencies for transfer out of the Guantanamo Bay detention center, prioritize the programs that defend the rights of women and girls, and ensure humanitarian crises have a robust response from the entire international community.

While the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) budget for the DOS was prepared and finalized before your confirmation, it is not too late for you to advocate for these crucial accounts, both to Congress and within the Administration.

I. Support Robust Funding for Humanitarian Accounts

In early May 2018, AIUSA sent a memorandum¹ to Congress outlining our funding priorities for FY19. The memo urges Congress to robustly fund the topline accounts within the DOS and the

¹ <https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/AIUSA-Appropriations-Recommendations.FY2019.1MAY2019.pdf>

U.S. Agency for International Development (“USAID”), accounts that the Trump Administration has proposed cutting by 30 percent compared to FY17 levels. These programs, that the international affairs budget funds, are life-saving and life-sustaining programs. They fund human rights programs, and provide essential humanitarian assistance around the world. These are programs that should be expanded, not cut. These cuts, were they to be enacted, would drastically reduce humanitarian assistance despite a humanitarian crisis of historic proportions.

It is crucial that funding in FY19 reflect the need to support international humanitarian assistance and the USRAP. We are witnessing the highest levels of displacement in recorded history, with over 65 million people fleeing their homes, escaping persecution, torture, and war. Of this number, 22.5 million are refugees, over half of whom are children. The U.S. has long been the largest single donor of international humanitarian aid and a longstanding leader in offering third country refugee resettlement opportunities here in the United States. Resettlement, as a durable solution for the world’s most vulnerable refugees, remains an essential tool to help them find permanent safety. By robustly funding accounts for refugees and displaced persons, the U.S. can lead the way in ensuring long-term safety, integration, and resettlement opportunities for those refugees that need it.

II. Support Humanitarian Aid for Rohingya in Myanmar

As an example of how critical the international affairs budget can be, one need look no further than the Rohingya who have fled an ethnic cleansing campaign waged by the Myanmar military. Amnesty International has researched and documented the mass atrocities and apartheid in Myanmar. Amnesty International staff have been on the ground in Bangladesh interviewing fleeing Rohingya and have seen, first hand, how critical U.S. contributions are to saving lives.

Since the beginning of Fiscal Year 2017, DOS has announced \$299M in humanitarian aid for the Rohingya. Amnesty International applauds this critically needed humanitarian aid and urges DOS to continue providing much needed aid to the Rohingya. Without dedicated resources allocated within the international affairs budget, this sustained DOS response would not be possible. We urge you to fight for robust resources for these accounts, not only to meet the needs of the Rohingya, but also meet the needs of the many other forcibly displaced populations throughout the world.

III. Guantanamo Bay Detention Center Detainees Cleared for Release

Under this Administration, DOS has closed the offices that were created during the previous Administration specifically dedicated to transfer detainees that had been cleared by national security agencies for transfer out of the Guantanamo Bay detention center to other countries. As a result, there are five Guantanamo detainees who have been cleared for transfer for many years yet remain imprisoned there indefinitely, simply because the U.S. has not found a place to transfer them. We urge you to restore these critical offices and positions at DOS, preferably as a Special Envoy in charge of transferring cleared detainees out of Guantanamo.

IV. Human Rights Defenders

We urge that you prioritize funding for the Human Rights Defenders Fund at the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor – a program that protects human rights defenders globally at DOS and the USAID. Around the world, human rights defenders face incredible challenges while doing dangerous work. They are often subject to death threats, arbitrary arrest, defamation campaigns, judicial harassment, violence, and even death. The U.S. must continue to prioritize protecting those who defend human rights around the world, often at great risk to themselves and their families, and ensure dedicated funding for the U.S. programs that undertake this critical work.

V. Support for Critical Roles at DOS

We strongly urge you to preserve programs and bureaus that have been previously at risk under this Administration. We ask you to preserve and continue staffing and resources for the Office of Global Criminal Justice (“GCJ”). Since its creation 20 years ago, GCJ has served as the principal advisor to the Secretary of State on issues related to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity – its work at DOS is critical, and must be maintained.

Further, we strongly urge you to maintain the expertise of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (“PRM”) at the State Department. PRM’s role in finding durable solutions for refugees either in the host country to which they have fled or in third countries willing to resettle refugees, serves in the U.S. national interest by supporting the stability of countries who are struggling to host significant numbers of refugees. We believe that disconnecting PRM’s vital role from the broader diplomatic mission of the DOS would undermine important foreign policy objectives and thus we urge you to set aside any such proposal.

Finally, we urge you to prioritize the programs and work that defend the rights of women and girls by maintaining and robustly funding the Global Women's Issues Office and by restoring the Ambassador-level position to the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.

VI. Conclusion

We welcome the commitment you made during your nomination process that DOS should be “at the forefront of America’s efforts to ease humanitarian crises.” We ask that you remember this commitment every day, and speak out for these critical, life-saving programs.

For more information, please contact Ryan Mace, Grassroots Advocacy and Refugee Specialist at Amnesty International USA at rmace@aiusa.org or 202.509.8185.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Huang". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Margaret" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Huang".

Margaret Huang

Executive Director

Amnesty International USA