



Human Rights on Capitol Hill

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Human Rights Updates

- (1) **Family separation**: Amnesty International demands that administration immediately halt family separation. In May 2018 Amnesty International conducted a multi-week research mission along the U.S.-Mexico border. Amnesty interviewed parents and guardians detained by Homeland Security (“DHS”), who gave heartbreaking accounts of how DHS agents had stripped



their children from their arms. Some parents did not know their children's whereabouts for several weeks. In this [statement](#) to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Amnesty International USA urged Congress to demand the administration to: a) reunify all families who have been forcibly separated; b) halt the policy of family separation; c) end the prolonged detention of parents and guardians who have been separated from minor children.

(2) North Korea: Amnesty International calls on Trump administration to raise human rights in all discussions with North Korea.

On June 12 President Trump met with North Korean Leader Kim Jong-Un in Singapore. Prior to the summit, Amnesty International USA and 11 NGOs [sent](#) a letter calling on the administration to raise human rights in all discussions with North Korea. At a June 15 Hill briefing Asia advocacy manager Francisco Bencosme called on the Trump administration to press North Korea to: a) close its prisons camps detaining some 120,000 people in horrific, life-threatening conditions; b) reunite families separated due to war, abductions, or forced disappearances; and c) to protect freedom of expression.

(3) Rohingya: Amnesty International urges Senate to quickly pass legislation holding

Myanmar military officials accountable for atrocities against the Rohingya. In May the House passed the National Defense Authorization Act ("NDAA") which included an amendment to hold Myanmar military officials accountable for atrocities against the Rohingya. In June the Senate started consideration of its NDAA bill. Amnesty International urges the Senate to approve the Cardin amendment designed to save Rohingya lives by pressuring the Myanmar military to halt ethnic cleansing. This amendment is a crucial step towards halting the systematic, widespread atrocities against the Rohingya.

(4) Syria: U.S.-led coalition against IS failed to take basic precautions to minimize civilian

deaths and casualties in Raqqa. In 2017 a U.S.-led coalition placed Raqqa under siege with the goal of removing the IS. In June 2018 [Amnesty International](#) published a report detailing how the coalition failed to take basic precautions to protect civilians, thereby violating international humanitarian law. The coalition's attacks killed or injured hundreds of Raqqa civilians. Amnesty International calls on the U.S. and other coalition member states to [publicly acknowledge the scale and seriousness of the loss of civilian lives](#) in Raqqa as well as the destruction of property and livelihoods resulting from the strikes.

(5) Refugees: Amnesty International presents June 14 Hill briefing on worldwide refugee

trends. In commemoration of World Refugee Day, Amnesty International's advocacy team briefed Congress on refugee developments. Amnesty's Asia advocacy manager, just returned



from Bangladesh, gave a first-hand report of swarming Rohingya refugee camps that are now bracing for monsoon rains. Amnesty’s Americas advocacy director, who recently interviewed parents detained in El Paso, recounted parental agony as DHS agents stripped their children from their arms. Amnesty’s Eurasia advocacy director described how Hungary is poised to become the first EU country to criminalize the act of aiding asylum seekers. Amnesty’s Africa advocacy director explained how the majority of the world’s worst displacement crises are taking place in Africa and how U.S. humanitarian aid is needed now more than ever. Finally, Amnesty’s refugee specialist spoke of the long-term successes of the U.S. Refugee Program and urged Congress to push the administration to resettle more refugees.



- (6) **Hungary:** poised to implement draconian initiative aimed at criminalizing those who aid asylum seekers. On May 30 Secretary Pompeo met with the Hungarian Foreign Minister. Amnesty International USA sent this [letter to the State Department](#) detailing how the Hungarian Parliament has moved to pass legislation known as “Stop Soros.” The most recent proposal would [criminalize individuals](#) providing information or offering legal advice to asylum seekers. If Hungary implements this proposal, it will become the first EU country to impose a sweeping, draconian measure aimed at criminalizing individuals who aid asylum seekers. Amnesty International urges Congress to press Hungary to halt all threats and intimidation designed to shut down civil society.
- (7) **Afghans:** Increasing numbers of Afghans seeking refugee protection in Turkey -- are facing forced repatriation. According to the [U.N. Refugee Agency](#), Afghans are the second largest protracted refugee population in the world. In April, [Turkish authorities](#) forcibly returned over 7500 asylum seekers to a war zone in Afghanistan; 2000 more in detention await a similar fate.



[Amnesty International](#) documented how Turkish authorities have rounded up Afghan asylum seekers, including those with small children, and have forced them to sign “voluntary” documents acceding to repatriation. Turkey’s deportations are taking place at a time when violence in Afghanistan is on the rise. [The United Nations](#) found that in 2017 approximately 100 people were killed in Afghanistan every day.



(8) Uzbekistan: Amnesty International urges Uzbek President to implement human rights reforms to end torture, protect LGBTI individuals, and guarantee freedom of religion: On May 16 President Trump met with Uzbekistan’s President who has ushered in important human rights reforms including the release of journalist [Bobomurod Abdullayev](#) and other prisoners of conscience. [Amnesty International](#) urged Uzbekistan’s President to build upon these [reforms](#) by doing more to prevent torture, protect LGBTI individuals, and guarantee freedom of religion.

(9) Artificial Intelligence: Lantos Commission hearing highlights potential impact of emerging technology on global human rights. Amnesty International submitted a [statement](#) for the May 22 Lantos Commission hearing on artificial intelligence (“AI”) and the consequences for human rights. In May, Amnesty International and Access Now launched the [Toronto Declaration: Protecting the Rights to Equality and Non-Discrimination in Machine Learning Systems](#). Using the international human rights framework, Amnesty International advised governments and the private sector of their obligations and responsibilities to proactively prevent discrimination, protect the rights of all individuals and groups, and promote diversity and inclusion.

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