



August 21, 2018

Rear Admiral Garry E. Hall
Senior Director for International Organizations and Alliances
National Security Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, First Floor, West Wing
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Recommendations on Key Human Rights Issues to Raise at U.N. General Assembly

Dear Admiral Hall:

Nearly one year ago at the 2017 U.N. General Assembly, Vice-President Pence and Ambassador Haley used their speeches to draw attention to Rohingya who were fleeing the Myanmar military's ethnic cleansing campaign into neighboring Bangladesh. Their speeches helped set the stage for a series of important measures implemented by this administration to aid the Rohingya, including multiple tranches of humanitarian aid and targeted financial sanctions against senior Myanmar military leaders responsible for atrocities against the Rohingya and other minorities.

Similarly at this year's 73rd session of UNGA, the Administration should seize the international platform to highlight the following human rights crises -- all which require a global, coordinated approach as they are beyond the capacity of any one country to effectively address and resolve.

Myanmar: Starting in August 2017, the Myanmar military executed a systematic ethnic cleansing campaign, amounting to crimes against humanity, that led to over 700,000 Rohingya fleeing to neighboring Bangladesh. These crimes included mass murder, torture, rape, sexual violence, persecution, enforced disappearance, and forced starvation. The U.S. has provided substantial humanitarian aid, sanctioned a senior

military official directly responsible for the atrocities, and has called on the Myanmar government to halt human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing. President Trump should highlight these actions in his address to the UN General Assembly, condemning the Myanmar military on the world stage and calling for accountability and justice for crimes against humanity. We urge President Trump to call upon the U.N. Security Council (“UNSC”) to:

- Refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court;
- Impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar; and
- Impose targeted financial sanctions against senior officials responsible for serious violations and crimes.

Yemen: The ongoing war in Yemen, which has resulted in an [“entirely man-made catastrophe.”](#) has continued to put the lives of millions of civilians at risk, making Yemen the worst [humanitarian crisis](#) in 2018. Worsening humanitarian conditions are exacerbated by widespread violations by all parties to the conflict. Over 70 percent of Yemen’s population depends on food aid, with 8.4 million on the brink of starvation due to food insecurity. Yemeni civilians are also in desperate need of medical aid and face one of the worst cholera outbreaks in history, with more than one million cases reported, almost half children.

On the one hand, the Huthi-allied forces have obstructed the distribution of humanitarian assistance and access and militarized the distribution of aid. On the other hand, the Saudi-led coalition has imposed a maritime blockade, restricting the flow of aid, fuel, and medicine.

In December 2017 the [White House responded](#) to the ongoing crisis by expressing its grave concern over the escalation of violence and calling on all parties, including the Saudi-led coalition, to immediately cease hostilities and facilitate the free flow of humanitarian aid. Yet since that time, U.S. weapons have continued to cause severe suffering for civilians in Yemen. The media has [recently reported](#) that a bomb that killed over 40 Yemeni school children in August 2018 was supplied by a U.S. company. We urge President Trump to call on the U.N. General Assembly to:

- Press all parties to the conflict in Yemen to facilitate the unimpeded and unrestricted flow of humanitarian assistance into the country, including ending delays on commercial imports of essential goods and to allow the reopening of Sana'a airport to commercial flights;
- Call on all States to immediately halt transfers of arms for use by the parties to the conflict in Yemen to ensure that no weapons, munitions, military equipment or technology, or logistical and financial support for such transfers, are supplied directly or indirectly to any party to the conflict in Yemen, or in support of military operations in Yemen;
- Call upon all parties to the conflict in Yemen to effectively implement the human rights and humanitarian provisions of UNSC Resolution 2216 and of the UNSC's Presidential Statement of 15 March 2018.
- Impose targeted sanctions against those responsible for obstructing humanitarian assistance and for committing other violations of international humanitarian law, in violation of UNSC Resolutions 2216 and 2140.

North Korea: The U.N. Commission of Inquiry on Democratic People's Republic of Korea ("DPRK") found systematic and widespread human rights violations in North Korea, including a prison camp system where individuals, sometimes along with their entire families, are jailed indefinitely, tortured, forced into labor, starved, and even executed. As the DPRK seeks to engage the international community, the U.S. must seize all opportunities to press the government of Kim Jong-un to halt these human rights abuses. The Trump administration is in a unique position to press the DPRK to undertake critically needed human rights reform. We urge President Trump to call upon the government of North Korea to:

- Open all government detention facilities, reeducation and forced labor camps, and prisons to visits by international observers. Release all detainees held for exercising free speech, religion or belief, or attempting to leave or leaving North Korea without permission.

- Engage with the Commission of Inquiry and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, including facilitating a country visit by U.N. authorities.

Colombia: Human rights defenders (“HRDs”) in Colombia have for decades routinely faced judicial harassment, intimidation, death threats, arbitrary detention, sexual violence, assault, torture, and even death. But since the signing of the [Peace Agreement](#) in November 2016, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of killings of HRDs in Colombia. In 2017 over [106 HRDs](#) were killed, and in the first seven months of 2018 alone, an additional [90 HRDs](#) have been killed, setting an all-time record. This means that [one third of all HRD killings worldwide](#) takes place in Colombia -- making Colombia the most dangerous country in the world for HRDs. Those HRDs suffering the most brutal attacks have been those working on the implementation of the Peace Agreement, those who defend the rights of victims of the internal armed conflict, and those who work on land, environmental, and indigenous rights. We urge President Trump to call upon the government of Colombia to:

- Immediately investigate and hold accountable all those responsible for the murders of HRDs.
- Ensure that concrete measures to protect HRDs are implemented.
- Repeal any legislation that criminalizes or restricts the work of HRDs.
- Publicly recognize the importance and legitimacy of HRDs and their work.

Saudi Arabia: Since May 2018 a number of leading women HRDs - including Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan, and Aziza al-Yousef - have been detained by Saudi authorities for their peaceful human rights work. Many have been detained without charge and may face trial before a counterterrorism court and up to 20 years in prison for their activism. In July [two more prominent women HRDs](#), Samar Badawi and Nassima al-Sada, were arrested by Saudi authorities. They have both been repeatedly targeted, harassed, and placed under travel bans for their human rights activism. Samar is the sister of imprisoned blogger Raif Badawi, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for setting up a website for public debate. We urge President Trump to call upon the Saudi government to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release all these HRDs and all other prisoners of conscience.
- Immediately put an end to the harassment of women HRDs, including those who have been actively and bravely campaigning for women's rights.
- Guarantee that all HRDs, including women's rights defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal.
- Allow all members of Saudi society, including women, to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, without any judicial harassment or other reprisals.

If you or your staff have any questions, 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
Amnesty International USA