

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Human Rights on Capitol Hill

published by Amnesty International USA

September 7, 2018

In this edition of Human Rights on Capitol Hill:

- 1) Turkey – Human Rights Defenders and Political Dissidents are Under Attack**
- 2) Myanmar - Senior Military Officials Finally Held Accountable for Crimes Against Humanity**
- 3) Amnesty International Recommends Key Human Rights Issues to Raise at U.N. General Assembly**
- 4) Yemen - U.S. Should Stop Supplying Weapons to Saudi Arabia-Led Coalition**
- 5) Syria – Department of Defense Should Investigate Civilian Casualties**
- 6) Kenya – Amnesty International Presses Presidents on Human Rights Record**
- 7) Mauritania – Trump Administration Should Halt the Deportation of Asylum Seekers**
- 8) Amnesty International Calls for Global Ban on Autonomous Weapons Systems**
- 9) Argentina – Legislature Fails to Protect Women’s Reproductive Rights**
- 10) Amnesty International Urges Co-Sponsorship of International Violence Against Women Act**
- 11) Upcoming Events – Amnesty Country Directors Will Visit Washington, D.C.**



Human Rights Updates

1) Turkey – Human Rights Defenders and Political Dissidents are Under Attack. On August 22 Daniel Balson, Eurasia Advocacy Director, was [interviewed](#) on Plugged in With Greta Van Susteren about how the Turkish government has [attacked](#) free press and political dissidents through threats, harassment, prosecutions and mass imprisonment. Human rights defenders (“HRDs”) in Turkey are living in constant fear. At any moment they might be arrested and find themselves in prison for months, even years, on baseless charges. On August 15 Turkish authorities finally [released](#) Taner Kilic, Chair of Amnesty International Turkey, who spent more than 14 months behind bars. Taner’s plight is emblematic of the [wave of repression](#) that has gripped Turkey since 2016, with more than 1,300 NGOs and 180 media outlets being shut down, and with over 50,000 people imprisoned awaiting trial. Ten other activists (known as the Istanbul 10), including İdil Eser, the Director of Amnesty International Turkey, were detained in summer 2017 while attending a human rights workshop. Eight of them were held for almost four months before being released on bail in October 2017. Taner Kilic and İdil Eser are still facing criminal trial for [baseless charges](#) of belonging to a terrorist group. Amnesty International would like to thank all the Congressional offices who have fought for their release, and we urge you to be resilient in pressing Turkish authorities to dismiss all charges against them.





2) Myanmar - Senior Military Officials Finally Held Accountable for Crimes Against Humanity. On August 17 the Department of Treasury [imposed targeted sanctions](#) against four Myanmar officials and two military units. In [response](#), Francisco Bencosme, advocacy manager for Asia-Pacific at Amnesty International USA was [cited](#) by [several news outlets](#): “Senior officials in Myanmar implicated in crimes against humanity must be held to account for their roles in the brutal ethnic cleansing campaign against the Rohingya women, men and children. Responsibility extends to the highest levels of the chain of command – so too should justice and accountability.” While Amnesty International celebrates this news, we call for [further action](#) to refer the situation in Myanmar to the UN Security Council.

3) Amnesty International Recommends Key Human Rights Issues to Raise at U.N. General Assembly. On August 21 Amnesty International USA sent a [letter](#) outlining human rights priorities that the Trump Administration should raise at the U.N. General Assembly in September. AIUSA calls for a global, coordinated approach to human rights crises in Myanmar, Yemen, North Korea, Colombia and Saudi Arabia. The Administration should seize the international platform to highlight these abuses and work to protect refugees, displaced persons and human rights defenders.

4) Yemen – U.S. Should Stop Supplying Weapons to Saudi Arabia-Led Coalition. In August Amnesty International [op-ed](#) was published in the Washington Post calling for the halt of arms sale to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Yemen. Since the coalition’s air strikes began in March 2015, Amnesty International has investigated dozens of air strike sites in eight governorates. Many of the remnants of munitions were manufactured in the U.S. On August 28 the U.N. Human Rights Council [recommended](#) nations to refrain from supplying weapons that could be used in the Yemen conflict. Congress should suspend all arms transfers to the coalition.

5) Syria – Department of Defense Should Investigate Civilian Casualties. In July a US-led military coalition [officially recognized](#) that its 2017 aerial bombardments killed 77 civilians in Raqqa. Amnesty International [urges](#) the Pentagon to follow up on those findings and investigate more broadly all claims of civilian casualties caused by the Raqqa offensive, as well as by all U.S. military operations going forward. Daphne Eviatar, Amnesty International Director of Security with Human Rights [said](#), “Victims and survivors in Raqqa are living with the unimaginable pain of having lost their loved ones with no explanation for the cause of their deaths and no accountability. The Department of Defense should now work with the Coalition to conduct independent and impartial investigations and provide reparations to victims and families of victims.”

6) Kenya – Amnesty International Presses Presidents on Human Rights Record. Ahead of their August 27 meeting at the White House, Amnesty International [advised](#)



President Trump and President Kenyatta to discuss pressing human rights concerns. Executive Directors from AIUSA and AI Kenya [asked the Presidents](#) to support efforts to protect refugees and indigenous communities, protect civic space for citizens and civil society organizations in Kenya, hold security forces and other government agencies accountable for abuse, and for the U.S. to more thoroughly investigate international drone strikes.

7) Mauritania – Trump Administration Should Halt the Deportation of Asylum Seekers. Amnesty International [calls](#) on the Trump Administration to stop [deporting](#), without fair consideration for their claims of protection, Mauritians who have sought refuge and safety in the U.S. A March [report](#) estimates that in 2016 up to 43,000 Mauritians were living in slavery. The Mauritanian government has [arrested](#) journalists, anti-slavery protesters, and other opposition activists in a [crackdown](#) on dissent. Adotei Akwei, Africa Advocacy Director [said](#), “The deportation of individuals back to an environment where they risk possible enslavement shows disdain for their human dignity and basic human rights and a complete violation of international law that flies in the face of decades of US traditions.”

8) Amnesty International Calls for Global Ban on Autonomous Weapons Systems. On August 14 Amnesty International sent a letter to Secretary Mattis and Secretary Pompeo [calling](#) for a pre-emptive ban on the development, production, and use of autonomous weapons systems. An Amnesty International report [documents](#) that fully autonomous weapons systems are incompatible with international human rights law, because they can select, attack, kill and wound human targets. Congress should support a ban on autonomous weapons systems because of human rights concerns.

9) Argentina – Senate Fails to Protect Women’s Reproductive Rights. On August 9 the Argentinian Senate voted against [legalizing abortion](#) for pregnancies up to 14 weeks. An estimated 500,000 clandestine abortions are performed annually and cause 30 percent of maternal deaths in Argentina. Hundreds of thousands of activists took to the streets in Buenos Aires and in cities around the world to show solidarity with Argentine women. Although the Senate vote was a major disappointment, it represents a [stepping stone, not a setback](#) in the fight for women’s rights in Argentina and Latin America.



10) Amnesty International Urges Co-Sponsorship of International Violence Against Women Act. The International Violence Against Women Act (“IVAWA”) prioritizes ending violence against women and girls as a part of U.S. foreign policy. Amnesty International [calls](#) on Congress to support the IVAWA (S. 2120 and H.R. 5034). [One in three](#) women will experience violence in her lifetime. About 130 million girls and women worldwide have suffered genital mutilation. Each year, two million girls under 15 years old are sold or coerced into prostitution. IVAWA is a budget-neutral bill that would establish a clear Global Strategy on how to combat violence, make the Office of Global Women’s Issues a permanent fixture in the State Department, develop comprehensive Country Plans, and lead to regular reports and briefs for Congress on violence against women and U.S. efforts to prevent it.

11) Upcoming Events – Amnesty Country Directors Will Visit Washington, D.C. On September 24 Amnesty International will hold a Hill briefing featuring Amnesty Directors of Argentina, Kenya and Ukraine. In addition, they will be joined by Amnesty Directors from Burkina Faso, Hungary, and Israel who will be in Washington, D.C. September 24-25. If you would like to schedule a meeting with any of the Amnesty Country Directors, please contact Meredith Cullen at mcullen@aiusa.org.

For more information, please contact:

Africa: Adotei Akwei aaakwei@aiusa.org

Asia: Francisco Bencosme
fbencosme@aiusa.org

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Eurasia: Daniel Balson dbalson@aiusa.org

Gender: Tarah Demant tdemant@aiusa.org

Nat Security: Daphne Eviatar
deviatar@aiusa.org

Crim justice: Krissy Roth kroth@aiusa.org

Hum rights defenders: Andrew Fandino
afandino@aiusa.org

Refugees: Ryan Mace rmace@aiusa.org

Gun violence: Zeke Johnson
zjohnson@aiusa.org

All other issues: Joanne Lin jlin@aiusa.org