



Amnesty International USA • November edition

HUMAN RIGHTS ON CAPITOL HILL

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1) President Trump's Proclamation Violates the Rights of Asylum Seekers

In November 2018 President Trump issued a proclamation, along with a joint interim DOJ and DHS rule, that seeks to radically restrict the rights of asylum seekers arriving from the southern border. For the first time the U.S. government is inventing a new rule that requires asylum seekers to present themselves at official ports of entry. This new rule violates asylum seekers' [rights under U.S. and international law](#) to seek asylum whether or not they are at an official port of entry. In October 2018 Amnesty International researchers traveled with the Honduran caravan as it migrated towards Northern Mexico. Mexican shelters are overflowing with thousands of families in children without proper food, medical care or protection. While some have chosen to [seek asylum in Mexico](#), Mexico cannot be considered a [uniformly safe country](#) for all asylum seekers.

In addition to the Trump administration's new rule, DHS moves to detain families indefinitely. Amnesty International USA condemns President Trump's [proposed regulation](#) that would effectively terminate the [1997 Flores Settlement Agreement](#) and allow children to be held in immigration detention for more than 20 days. In October 2018 Amnesty International USA [joined](#) the American Immigration Council, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and the Dilley Pro Bono Project to demand that [ICE release 38 families held in prolonged detention](#) at the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas.

An October 2018 Amnesty International [report](#) revealed that [Trump's immigration policies](#) resulted in more family separations than previously disclosed. Amnesty International [condemns](#) the administration's [mass pushbacks](#) of asylum seekers, use of [excessive force](#) by the U.S. military or CBP, [denial of access to asylum](#) to thousands of individuals which violates U.S. and international law, [separation of families](#) at the border, and [detention](#) of individuals and families that amount to the level of torture in some cases. Congress should 1) exercise greater oversight of [DHS agencies](#) to halt illegal pushbacks of asylum seekers; 2) pass legislation banning the separation and detention of families with children; 3) fund community-based alternatives to detention such as the Family Case Management Program; 4) increase funding for immigration teams and asylum officers; 5) decriminalize irregular entry into the U.S. in line with international standards and 6) ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Left: On October 22 Honduran migrants were stuck at the Suchiate River on the border between Mexico and Guatemala in fear of reprisal by authorities if they cross the river in rafts

2) Saudi Arabia - Amnesty International USA Protests Murder of Jamal Khashoggi and U.S. Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia

On October 11 Amnesty International USA protested in front of the Saudi Arabia Embassy to demand an independent investigation into Jamal Khashoggi's murder. Amnesty International also called on the [U.N. Secretary General](#) and [President Trump](#) to set up a U.N. investigation into Khashoggi's murder. Amnesty International USA is urging [Congress](#) to [ban U.S. arms sales](#) to Saudi Arabia since U.S.-manufactured bombs have killed civilians in Yemen.



Above: On October 11 Amnesty International USA protested for an independent investigation into the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in front of the Saudi Arabia Embassy

3) India - Indian Government Raids Amnesty India Offices in Attempt to Halt Human Rights Work

On October 26 [Indian authorities raided](#) Amnesty India's office and froze its bank accounts, effectively stopping vital human rights work. Amnesty International India's Executive Director Aakar Patel stated, "The Enforcement Directorate's raid on our office today shows how the authorities are now treating human rights organizations like criminal enterprises, using heavy-handed methods that are commonly found in repressive states. Our staff have been harassed and intimidated." In late November Asia Advocacy Director Francisco Bencosme will be visiting the Amnesty India office and can brief your offices on our work in India.

4) Hungary - State Department Should Reinstate Program to Promote Independent Media

Independent media in Hungary is [highly restricted](#), with supporters of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán enjoying a near-monopoly ownership of print and broadcast media and government officials routinely denying advertising revenue to outlets that carry a critical line. The Hungarian government has effectively shut down independent media outlets and tacitly encouraged a [campaign of harassment](#) targeting journalists and others critical of Prime Minister Orbán. In October 2018 the State Department gutted a program to train Hungarian journalists. Congressional offices should [reaffirm their support](#) for this funding to ensure objective media in Hungary and press Hungarian officials to ensure fundamental freedoms for journalists.

5) Amnesty International USA Urges Congress to Adopt Human Rights Defenders' Cases

For the first time, Amnesty International's annual "[Write for Rights](#)" campaign features all women Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), including refugees, bloggers and other social justice activists. Amnesty International USA is urging Congress to press for the release of these HRDs unjustly imprisoned, stop their torture, and end other human rights abuses. "Write for Rights" ends on January 31, 2019. Now is the time for Members of Congress to adopt and champion these HRD cases.

Breaking News: On October 17 Vietnamese blogger Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, also known as Mother Mushroom, was [finally released](#) after being jailed for over two years. She was exiled from Vietnam and [sent with her family](#) to the United States, where she currently resides. Her release brings hope to over 100 prisoners of conscience jailed in Vietnam today.



Above: On October 17 Me Nam (Mother Mushroom) was reunited with her family

6) Myanmar - Amnesty International Withdraws the Ambassador of Conscience Award from Aung San Suu Kyi

On November 13 Amnesty International's Secretary General [announced](#) the rescission of the Ambassador of Conscience award -- Amnesty International's highest honor -- from Aung San Suu Kyi. She has chosen to overlook and excuse the brutal oppression and crimes against humanity committed by the military against the Rohingya and against minorities in the Kachin and northern Shan States. As an organization which campaigned tirelessly for her release – and the release of all prisoners of conscience in Myanmar – Amnesty International is dismayed that Myanmar civil authorities have not only failed to repeal or amend repressive laws but has actively used them to curb freedom of expression, and arrest and imprison human rights defenders, journalists and other peaceful activists.

What's Coming Down the Pike?

- *70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Event* – On December 10 join Amnesty International USA and other human rights organizations to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 20th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. This event will feature both a panel with Human Rights Defenders from 4-6 pm and a reception from 6-8 pm. For more information and to RSVP please email mcullen@aiusa.org.
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