



Amnesty International USA • February edition

# HUMAN RIGHTS ON CAPITOL HILL

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# 1) Congress Must Not Fund the President's Border Wall, Increase Border Militarization or Expand Immigration

## Detention Beds

With the February 15 deadline fast approaching, Amnesty International USA urges Congress to oppose any policies and practices that block [asylum seekers from accessing humanitarian protection](#) at the border, including a [proposed border wall](#), an increase in border militarization and an expansion of immigration detention beds.

State of the Union (SOTU): Instead of offering a way out of gridlock, the President doubled down on his singular obsession with his border wall. In our [response](#) to the SOTU, Amnesty International USA made clear “No wall, no military buildup, no expansion of detention facilities, no pushbacks of people legally seeking asylum at the border. It’s time to come back to human rights and work for policies that treat all people and families with dignity.”  
counsel in immigration proceedings.

## 2) Amnesty International Delegation Documents Effects of Remain in Mexico on Asylum Seekers

In late January, Amnesty International sent a [delegation to the southern border](#) to document the [effects of the Remain in Mexico deal](#) on asylum seekers. The [Remain in Mexico deal](#) violates international law and endangers thousands of families and children seeking protection. Instead of entering the U.S., thousands of asylum seekers are being forced to wait in Mexico while their asylum claims are processed. [Mexico is not a safe country](#) for all people seeking protection. Many asylum seekers face exploitation, sexual assault, or murder [while being forced to wait](#) for extraordinarily long times in northern Mexico.

The delegation included the directors of Amnesty International USA, [Mexico](#), [Canada](#), Ireland, Norway and [Belgium](#). They [accompanied three LGBT minors](#) to present their asylum claims at the San Ysidro port of entry. Upon approaching the San Ysidro port of entry, the delegation was [stopped by Mexican and U.S. authorities](#) who [refused to allow the children](#) to proceed any further to present their asylum claims. Amnesty International USA Executive Director Margaret Huang was eventually able to accompany the children to present their asylum claims. To provide a fair asylum process, Congress must press the U.S. government to end Remain in Mexico and ensure that asylum seekers are able to [promptly and safely request humanitarian protection](#) in the U.S. without unnecessary delay.



Above: On January 30 an Amnesty International delegation traveled to the San Ysidro port of entry and documented how U.S. border officials are actively discouraging asylum seekers from entering the U.S.

### 3) Saudi Arabia and Yemen - Congress Must Halt Weapons Sales to the Saudi Arabia and U.A.E. Coalition

On February 5 Amnesty International USA called on the [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#) to address the ongoing war and humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. The human rights situation in the Arabian Peninsula [continues to deteriorate](#) amidst continued crackdowns on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, the arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights activists, the institutionalized inequality of women, and the ongoing conflict in Yemen. Congress must pass The [Saudi Arabia Accountability and Yemen Act of 2018](#) and halt any future weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). In addition, Congress must pass the bipartisan [Yemen Refueling Act](#) to stop the U.S. from providing [in-flight refueling of Saudi aircraft](#) conducting bombing missions in Yemen.

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### 4) Nigeria – Congress Must Halt Funding for Security Forces That Fired on Unarmed Demonstrators

On January 17 Amnesty International USA [urged Congress](#) to press the State Department to apply the Leahy Law to Nigerian security forces. On October 30 Nigerian security forces [open fired on unarmed demonstrators](#) and killed 23 people. The Nigerian military then refuted the number of fatalities and attempted to justify the use of force. Congress must implement the Leahy Law to prohibit any funding from being used for training or equipment of security forces that have committed human rights violations. Congress must ensure that no U.S. assistance directly supports such a gross violation of human rights.

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### 5) Guantanamo Bay – Amnesty International Calls on Congress to End Indefinite Detention Without Justice

On January 11 Amnesty International and the Congressional Progressive Caucus hosted a panel discussion on the 17th anniversary of the opening of the U.S. detention center at the Guantánamo Bay military base. The panel featured former Guantánamo detainee Mohamedou Slahi who spoke about his [treatment and experience as a detainee](#) at Guantánamo. Congress must 1) hold hearings on the status of Guantánamo and why no detainees cleared for release have been transferred since President Trump took office; 2) lift current restrictions on [transferring Guantánamo detainees](#) to the U.S., even for trial or medical treatment; and 3) refuse to fund expansion of the prison.

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### 6) Muslim Ban – Amnesty International USA Marks Two-Year Anniversary of Trump Muslim Ban With Capitol Hill Photo Exhibit of Refugees

On January 28 Amnesty International hosted a [photo exhibit](#) on Capitol Hill to mark the two-year anniversary of the Muslim Ban. On display were photos of refugees who were denied resettlement in the U.S. as a direct consequence of the Muslim Ban and are still stuck in refugee camps in the Middle East. Only 13 Syrian refugees have arrived to date in Fiscal Year 2019 compared to 841 Syrians in the last full year of the Obama Administration. Amnesty International USA thanks Representative Lofgren (CA-19) for her support in this project and Representative Chu (CA-27) and Representative Garcia (TX-29) for attending.





*Above: On January 28 Representative Judy Chu (CA-27) spoke with Ryan Mace, Amnesty International USA Grassroots and Refugee Specialist, about the two-year anniversary of the Muslim Ban.*

## 7) Amnesty International Legislative Coordinators Urge Congress to Protect Asylum Seekers at the Southern Border and Halt Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E.

On January 28 Amnesty International Legislative Coordinators met with several dozen Members of Congress. They urged Congress to oppose the Trump policies that block asylum seekers from accessing humanitarian protection at the U.S.-Mexico border. They also lobbied Congress to end U.S. support of the Saudi Arabia and U.A.E.-coalition's intervention in Yemen.



*Above: On January 28 Amnesty International Legislative Coordinators came to Capitol Hill to call for protection of asylum seekers at the southern border and to end arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E.*

## What's Coming Down the Pike?

- On February 12 Amnesty International USA will host a briefing on human rights issues for the new Congress from 3:30-4:30 pm in Cannon House Office Building room 121. U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E., Remain in Mexico, Central American asylum seekers, and much more will be covered. For more information and to RSVP, please email [mcullen@aiusa.org](mailto:mcullen@aiusa.org).

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