



Amnesty International USA • March edition

# HUMAN RIGHTS ON CAPITOL HILL

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## U.S./Mexico

1) Trump Administration Undermines State Department's Human Rights Report

In response to the U.S. State Department [human rights report](#) released March 13, Amnesty International [stated](#) that the report documents alarming shifts around the world that endanger human rights defenders. The gap between the State Department's official assessment of human rights globally and the Trump administration's refusal to prioritize the issue in its foreign policy is outrageous. The State Department has also excluded sexual and reproductive rights from its assessments, wrongfully suggesting that these are not human rights and undercutting the serious violations of these rights.

2) Amnesty International USA Calls on Senate to Pass Resolution Terminating President's National Emergency

Amnesty International USA supports [H.J.Res 46](#) to terminate the President's national emergency and [urges the Senate](#) to quickly pass the joint resolution. By declaring a [national emergency](#), the President has manufactured a crisis for the purpose of militarizing the southern border region and [blocking asylum seekers](#) from safety in the U.S. The emergency declaration enables the President to raid military construction accounts to fund his border wall. This action constitutes an end-run around the Congressional appropriations process and will have a devastating impact on children, asylum seekers, and border resi-

dents, including Indigenous communities.



*Above: On February 18 Amnesty Americas Advocacy Director Charanya Krishnaswami spoke at a rally outside the White House protesting the President's national emergency declaration.*

### 3) DHS Must End the Separation and Detention of Children and Families and Ensure Access to Humanitarian Protection for Asylum Seekers at the U.S.-Mexico Border

In February, Amnesty International USA submitted [statements](#) for [House Judiciary Committee](#) and [House Energy and Commerce](#) hearings on the Trump administration's family separation policies. The Trump administration's deliberate and punitive practice of forced family separations in some cases [constituted torture](#) and have been leveraged to compel families to abandon their asylum claims.

Amnesty International USA submitted a [statement](#) for the March 6 [House Homeland Security Committee](#) oversight hearing on the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS"). Amnesty International has concluded that DHS has 1) [turned back asylum seekers](#) at ports of entry; 2) separated children from their parents; and 3) detained record numbers of asylum seekers, including children, some who are sexual abused and even die in DHS custody.

### 4) Amnesty International USA Calls on Senate to Pass Legislation Requiring Universal Background Checks for All Firearm Purchases to Stem Gun Violence

In February, the House passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 ([H.R. 8](#)). Amnesty International USA [urges the Senate](#) to quickly pass the Background Check Expansion Act ([S. 42](#)) which would require [universal background checks](#) for firearm sales. Amnesty International USA opposed the [measure](#)

added last minute to the House bill, which unfairly singles out and punishes immigrants. All [gun control](#) legislation must protect the safety of *all* communities.

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## Americas

### 5) Venezuela – Amnesty International Calls on Venezuelan Authorities to End Human Rights Violations

In February, Amnesty International submitted [statements](#) for [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#) and [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) hearings on the human rights violations in Venezuela. In January 2019, Venezuelan security forces, under the command of Nicolas Maduro, committed six extrajudicial executions, arbitrarily detained 137 people, and used [excessive force](#) on protesters, in which 41 people died from gunshot wounds. The Venezuelan government has also failed to adequately respond to the [socioeconomic crisis](#), including lack of access to basic [health and food](#) and an inflation rate of one million percent. Congress must denounce the human rights abuses and strengthen support for civil society and human rights defenders in Venezuela.

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## Asia

### 6) North Korea – President Trump Disregarded Human Rights Atrocities During February 27-28 Summit with Kim Jong-Un

President Trump was [deafeningly silent](#) on Kim Jong-Un’s perpetration of human rights abuses at the [summit](#) in Vietnam. North Koreans [have endured](#) enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, forced labor in prison camps, severe restrictions on freedom of expression and movement, and decades of family separation. President Trump needs to appoint a North Korean Human Rights Envoy, a post that has been vacant for two years.

### 7) China – Congress Must Pass Legislation to Halt Human Rights Violations of Turkic Muslims

Amnesty International USA calls on [Congress](#) to support the [Uighur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019](#) to pressure Chinese authorities to end the detention of Turkic Muslims. Up to one million Uighurs and other ethnic Muslims are being arbitrarily [detained in “political education” camps](#) across Xinjiang province. Chinese authorities have [detained people](#) for their perceived disloyalty to the government and Chinese Communist Party. Amnesty International has [called on the U.N. Human Rights Council](#) to adopt a resolution establishing an international fact-finding mission to [investigate these atrocities](#).

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## Middle East

### 8) U.S. Must Stop Weapons Sales to the Saudi Arabia-UAE Led Coalition

In a [statement](#) for the March 6 [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#) hearing, Amnesty International USA documented how the [human rights situation](#) in Yemen continues to deteriorate amidst the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis. The U.S. directly assists the Saudi Arabia-UAE led coalition's campaign that has led to one of the most severe contemporary humanitarian crises of our time. Congress must pass the [Saudi Arabia Accountability and Yemen Act of 2019](#) to suspend weapon sales to Saudi Arabia, pass the [Yemen Refueling Prohibition Act](#) to prohibit U.S. refueling of Saudi Coalition Aircraft engaged in the war in Yemen, and hold accountable all actors responsible for war crimes and civilian casualties.

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## Africa

### 9) Cameroon – Amnesty International Applauds U.S. Military Aid Cuts to Security Forces Engaged in Human Rights Abuses

Amnesty International [applauds](#) the U.S.'s decision to cut some military aid to Cameroon over growing allegations of human rights abuses by Boko Haram and government security forces. Africa Advocacy Director Adotei Akwei [appeared](#) on several [news programs](#) urging the U.S. to suspend all security assistance until the Cameroonian government demonstrates it has not committed serious violations of international law. Concerns over [human rights violations](#) surfaced after [videos showed](#) Cameroon's security forces firing automatic weapons at unarmed civilians.



Above: On February 6 Africa Advocacy Director Adotei Akwei appeared on Al Jazeera about U.S. military aid cuts to Cameroon security forces.

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## Refugees

### 10) Amnesty International USA Testifies at House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing on Global Refugee Crisis

At a February 26 [House Foreign Affairs hearing](#), Ryan Mace, Amnesty’s refugee specialist, [testified](#) on the global refugee crisis. Amnesty International USA urges Congress to sustain robust humanitarian aid for refugees and displaced persons worldwide, and restore its commitment to resettling refugees.



*Above: On February 26 Refugee Specialist Ryan Mace testified before the House Foreign Affairs Africa Subcommittee on the global refugee crisis.*

## 11) Amnesty International USA Urges DHS to Extend Temporary Protected Status for 10 Designee Countries

In a [statement](#) for the March 6 [House Judiciary Committee](#) hearing, Amnesty International USA addressed the human rights situation in 10 countries that are currently designated for Temporary Protected Status (“TPS”). The Trump administration’s decisions to end TPS for several countries imperil many longtime U.S. residents who are at risk of deportation to countries where they may face violence, persecution, torture, even death. These 10 countries include South Sudan, Nepal, Syria, Honduras, Yemen, Somalia, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan. Amnesty International USA urges DHS to extend TPS for all 10 countries and to designate [Venezuela](#) for TPS.

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## Amnesty International USA’s Human Rights Priorities

### 12) Amnesty International USA Issues 2019 Human Rights Priorities in Asia

In a report published by the National Bureau of Research, Asia Advocacy Manager Francisco Bencosme outlined Amnesty International USA’s [top human rights priorities](#). Amnesty International USA urges Congress to establish a fund protecting Indo-Pacific human rights defenders and journalists, and engage with regional leaders on the human rights crisis in China, North Korean, Myanmar and India.

## 13) Amnesty International Documents Increasing Use of Violence to Repress Dissent in Middle East

A [February Amnesty International report](#) examines how crackdown of civil society actors and political opponents increased significantly in 2018 throughout the Middle East. Authorities used arbitrary detention, excessive force against protesters, and administrative measures to restrict human rights defenders. The [killing of Palestinian protesters by Israeli forces](#) in Gaza and the [murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi](#) in a Saudi consulate glaringly illustrate the impunity of Middle Eastern states that routinely use lethal violence to repress dissent.

## 14) Amnesty International USA Hosts Capitol Hill Briefing on Human Rights Priorities for the 116th Congress

On February 12 Amnesty International USA held a [Capitol Hill briefing](#). Executive Director Margaret Huang talked about her recent [trip to the southern border](#) to document the [effects of the Remain in Mexico](#) deal, which violates international law and endangers thousands of families and children seeking protection. Middle East and North Africa Advocacy Director Philippe Nassif urged Congress to support the [Saudi Arabia Accountability and Yemen Act of 2019](#) to suspend weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

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### *What's Coming Down the Pike?*

- On March 18 from 4-6pm in Rayburn Room 2168 Amnesty International will cosponsor an [event](#) celebrating International Women's Day. The event will feature women's human rights defenders from around the world with a reception to follow. You can RSVP here: <http://bit.ly/318GenderEvent>.

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