



Amnesty International USA • June edition

HUMAN RIGHTS ON CAPITOL HILL

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What’s Coming Down the Pike? On June 18 Amnesty International USA will host a Capitol Hill [briefing](#) to commemorate PRIDE month from 3:30-4:30 pm in Cannon House Building Room 122. RSVP [here](#).

1) Asia

a) China Amnesty International USA Co-Sponsors Capitol Hill Rally to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Crackdown

The Tiananmen mothers, a group of organized Chinese citizens who lost family members in the crackdown, were honored with the Truman Reagan Freedom Medal. The [rally](#) featured speeches from Speaker Pelosi, Rep. Chris Smith, Rep. Levin, Rep. McGovern and Francisco Bencosme of Amnesty USA. Amnesty calls on Congress to pressure the Chinese government to protect human rights. Congress should swiftly pass the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act ([S. 178](#)), which is [necessary](#) to [hold the Chinese government accountable](#) for the arbitrary detention of millions of Uyghurs.



Above: On June 4, Francisco Bencosme of Amnesty USA spoke at a Capitol Hill rally to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

b) Hong Kong – Extradition Law Amendments Would Make It Easier for Authorities to Target Dissidents

Amnesty International holds strong concerns over the [extradition law amendments](#) proposed in Hong Kong, an issue that mobilized hundreds of thousands of protesters in early June. Because these proposed amendments expand extradition and mutual legal assistance arrangements to include mainland China, it would become legal for Hong Kong to hand over people to the mainland. If passed, authorities would be able to target journalists, NGO leaders, human rights defenders, and others without adequate human rights protections. Amnesty International calls on Congress to urge the Hong Kong government to withdraw these dangerous amendments.

c) Myanmar – New Amnesty International Report Documents How the Myanmar Military Is Attacking Multiple Ethnic Minority Groups

The May 2019 [report](#) documents how the Myanmar military has carried out extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances of civilians since January 2019. These attacks extend beyond the Myanmar military's forced displacement of 900,000 Rohingya. Amnesty International interviewed ethnic Rakhine, Mro, Rohingya and Khami villagers belonging to Buddhist, Christian and Muslim faiths, and estimate an additional 30,000 civilians have been displaced by the ongoing conflict in Rakhine State in 2019. Myanmar authorities have also imposed arbitrary restrictions on the transport of medical supplies and food. Amnesty USA urges Congress to pass the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act ([S. 1186](#)) and BURMA Act ([H.R. 5819](#)) to pressure the Myanmar military to stop these atrocities.

2) Americas

a) Venezuela – Congress Must Pass Temporary Protected Status (“TPS”) for Venezuelans

On May 22 the House Judiciary Committee approved the Venezuela TPS Act ([H.R.549](#)). Venezuela is undergoing a massive human rights crisis, and over [four million Venezuelans](#) have fled to neighboring countries. Amnesty calls on Congress to [swiftly pass TPS](#) for Venezuelans, which would provide lifesaving protections for an estimated 150,000 Venezuelans in the U.S.

b) Nicaragua –Nicaraguan Government Is Detaining and Torturing Political Dissidents

Amnesty International USA submitted a [statement](#) for the June 10 House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on “Crushing Dissent: The Ongoing Crisis in Nicaragua.” Amnesty International has [documented](#) the widespread use of lethal force, torture and arbitrary detention as forms of punishment for demonstrations and political dissidence. In 2018 a series of reforms to the social security system [triggered widespread social protests](#). In response, the Nicaraguan government adopted a strategy of violent repression. At least 325 people were killed in the protests, primarily by state security forces and pro-government armed groups. More than 2,000 people were injured and hundreds arbitrarily detained. Congress must adopt a resolution condemning the government's use of extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions and torture as reprisal for political dissidence, and support efforts of independent oversight bodies to ensure redress for these actions.

c) U.S./Mexico - Expansion of Trump Administration's Remain in Mexico Policy Prevents Asylum Seekers from Accessing Protection

President Trump backed off his threats of tariffs after Mexico agreed to expand “Remain in Mexico” throughout the southwest border. This is a [deeply dangerous program](#) which sends asylum seekers back to harm's way, in [likely violation](#) of domestic and international law. Mexico also agreed to send 6,000 National Guard troops to the Mexico-Guatemalan border, and engaged in [mass detention and deportation of 400 asylum seekers and migrants](#). One week prior, U.S. immigration officials [were dispatched](#) to the Guatemala side of the Mexico-Guatemala border to stem the flow of northward migration, and

the administration is reportedly close to finalizing a rule that would [bar anyone who passed through Mexico or Canada](#) from seeking asylum. Congress must push back against Trump administration measures that erode access to asylum at the border and circumvent U.S. legal obligations to asylum seekers.

3) Mid-East

a) Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia Seeks Death Sentence Against Child Arrested at Age 13

Saudi Arabia is [seeking the death penalty](#) in the case of [Murtaja Qureiris](#) for offenses, some dating back to when he was just [10 years old](#). He was arrested at the age of 13 for protesting the Saudi government and has been [detained ever since](#). This case illustrates how Saudi authorities are going to extreme lengths to crack down on dissent, including by resorting to the death penalty for children. Amnesty International calls on Saudi authorities to drop the death sentence against Qureiris.

b) Saudi Arabia - Amnesty International Calls on Congress to Pass Resolution Condemning Saudi Arabia's Detention and Abuse of Women Human Rights Defenders ("WHRDs")

On May 22 the House Foreign Affairs Committee approved the resolution "Condemning the Government of Saudi Arabia's continued detention and alleged abuse of women's rights activists" ([H.Res.129](#)). Since May 2018 the Saudi government has [arbitrarily detained 13 prominent WHRDs](#), at least 10 who were tortured or sexually abused. Amnesty calls on Congress to swiftly pass H.Res.129 to protect Saudi WHRDs from further attacks.

c) Syria - Amnesty USA Executive Director Visits Raqqa to Document Civilian Casualties Resulting from U.S.-led Coalition's Air Strikes

[More than 80 percent](#) of Raqqa has been destroyed by [U.S. strikes](#). Amnesty calls for the U.S.-led Coalition to [provide assistance](#) to [women, children](#) and other community members, with a focus on funding much-needed infrastructure and services.

4) Africa

a) Sudan – New Evidence of Government-Sponsored War Crimes in Darfur Shows Withdrawal of Peacekeepers Premature and Reckless

Amnesty International has documented [disturbing new evidence](#) that Sudanese government forces, including the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias, have continued to commit war crimes and other serious human rights violations in Darfur. In the past year these have included the complete or partial destruction of at least 45 villages, unlawful killings, and sexual violence.

b) Botswana – Decriminalization of Consensual Same Sex Relations Should Inspire Other African Countries

On June 11 Amnesty International [celebrated the judgement](#) by the Gaborone High Court to decriminalization consensual same sex relations. However, 29 African countries retain laws criminalizing same sex relations, including Kenya, where a law banning gay sex was upheld by the Kenyan High Court in May 2019. Amnesty International calls on other African countries to follow Botswana's example.

What's Coming Down the Pike?

- On June 18 Amnesty will host a Capitol Hill briefing to commemorate PRIDE month titled "[A Time of Price, A Time of Crisis: The Global State of LGBTI Rights](#)" from 3:30-4:30 pm in Cannon House Building Room 122. Come hear what Congress can do to help protect LGBTI rights globally. Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Please RSVP [here](#).
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