



Amnesty International USA • July edition

# HUMAN RIGHTS ON CAPITOL HILL

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## In this edition:

- 1) **State Department** - Amnesty International USA Denounces Secretary Pompeo's Commission on Unalienable Rights
- 2) **U.S.-Mexico Border**
  - a) Amnesty International USA Executive Director Will Testify on Child Detention at House Appropriations Subcommittee Hearing
  - b) Amnesty International USA Calls for the Immediate Closure of the Homestead Child Detention Facility
  - c) DOJ Must Drop Charges Against Humanitarian Aid Worker Scott Warren
- 3) **U.S. Refugee Program** - Amnesty International USA Condemns Any Effort to Shut Down U.S. Refugee Program
- 4) **Lebanon** – Amnesty International Concludes That Lebanon Has Illegally Returned Refugees to Syria
- 5) **Saudi Arabia** – Amnesty International USA Applauds Congressional Action to Block Arms Sales to Saudi-Emirati Coalition Committing Human Rights Atrocities in Yemen
- 6) **Myanmar**
  - a) Amnesty International Documents Disproportional Impact of Displacement on the Elderly
  - b) Myanmar Authorities Must End Internet Shutdown
- 7) **Thailand** – In Upcoming Visit, Secretary Pompeo Must Press Thai Government to Uphold Free and Fair Elections

## What's Coming Down the Pike?

- July 24, 9 am, 2359 Rayburn: Executive Director Margaret Huang will testify before the House Appropriations Health and Human Services Subcommittee [hearing](#) on child detention facilities.
- July 24, 4:30 pm, Dirksen G11: Asia Advocacy Manager Francisco Bencosme will moderate a Senate Human Rights Caucus [panel](#) on religious freedom in China.
- July 25, 10 am: Asia Advocacy Manager Francisco Bencosme will testify before the House Foreign Affairs Asia Subcommittee hearing on human rights in southeast Asia.
- July 25, 2 pm: Amnesty International USA will co-host a [panel](#) on human rights abuses in Myanmar.

# 1) State Department - Amnesty International USA Denounces Secretary Pompeo's Commission on Unalienable Rights

On July 8, Secretary Pompeo [announced](#) the [creation](#) of a Commission on Unalienable Rights at the State Department. Amnesty International joined a [letter](#) with 430 other organizations denouncing the creation of the new commission. While the so-called purpose of the [commission](#) is to [reexamine human rights](#) in the [context](#) of foreign policy, this [commission](#) is aimed at [weakening](#) international human rights frameworks, and stripping away [protections](#) for women and LGBTI individuals.

## 2) U.S.-Mexico Border

### a) Amnesty International USA Executive Director Will Testify on Child Detention at House Appropriations Subcommittee [Hearing](#)

On July 24, Executive Director Margaret Huang will testify before a House Appropriations Subcommittee on her recent visits to the child detention facilities in Homestead (FL) and Carrizo Springs (TX). For more information about these facilities contact Americas Advocacy Director Charanya Krishnaswami at [ckswami@aiusa.org](mailto:ckswami@aiusa.org).

### b) Amnesty International USA Calls for the Immediate Closure of the Homestead Child Detention Facility

On July 18, Amnesty International USA published its new [report](#) on the Homestead child detention facility. The U.S. government has detained thousands of children at Homestead even though the vast majority of these children, have families and sponsors willing to take them in. Amnesty is calling for the immediate closure of Homestead and all other mass child detention facilities.

### c) DOJ Must Drop Charges Against Humanitarian Aid Worker Scott Warren

On July 2, the same day that Amnesty International published its new report on U.S. authorities' [harassment and targeting](#) of lawyers and advocates

at the U.S.-Mexico border, the U.S. government announced it would retry Dr. Scott Warren. Dr. Warren is a humanitarian aid worker who has been criminally prosecuted for providing lifesaving assistance to migrants. Amnesty International USA calls on DOJ to drop all charges against Dr. Warren and on Congress to conduct oversight of U.S. harassment of human rights defenders.



Left: On July 2, the DOJ announced it would retry Dr. Scott Warren for providing lifesaving assistance to migrants. Amnesty International calls on the DOJ to drop all charges against Dr. Warren.

### 3) U.S. Refugee Program - Amnesty International USA Condemns Any Effort to Shut Down U.S. Refugee Program

According to news [reports](#), the Trump Administration is considering [zeroing](#) out the number of refugees to be [admitted](#) to the U.S. in Fiscal Year 2020. Amnesty International USA calls on the U.S. to admit at least 95,000 refugees in FY 2020.

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### 4) Lebanon – Amnesty International Concludes That Lebanon Has Illegally Returned Refugees to Syria

Since July 2018, Lebanese authorities have been returning refugees to Syria, claiming these returns are voluntary. Lebanese authorities are pushing people back to Syria through a combination of restrictive Lebanese government policies and dire humanitarian conditions. Amnesty International [analysis](#) has concluded that Lebanon is breaching its obligation not to return refugees to a place where they can be persecuted.

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### 5) Saudi Arabia – Amnesty International USA Applauds Congressional Action to Block Arms Sales to Saudi-Emirati Coalition Committing Human Rights Atrocities in Yemen

[In July, Congress passed resolutions \(S.J.Res.36, S.J.Res.37 and S.J.Res.38\)](#) to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. On July 12, the House passed [\(H.Amdt.561\)](#) as part of the National Defense Authorization Act [\(H.R.2500\)](#), which would prohibit the sale of air-to-ground munitions used in Yemen to the Saudi-Emirati coalition for one year.

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### 6) Myanmar

#### a) Amnesty International Documents Disproportional Impact of Displacement on the Elderly

A new Amnesty International [report](#) documents the effects of the Myanmar military's operations on older people. The Myanmar military has forced tens of thousands of older people from ethnic minorities to flee their homes. The humanitarian system fails to adequately address their rights and needs.

#### b) Myanmar Authorities Must End Internet Shutdown

Since June 21, Myanmar authorities have imposed a complete internet shutdown in the Rakhine and Chin states. The Tatmadaw has committed serious violations amounting to war crimes. Authorities have not yet announced when this shutdown will end. Congress must speak out against this injustice and push Myanmar authorities to [immediately end the shutdown](#). Congress must pass the Burma Political Prisoners Assistance Act (H.R.2327) to secure the release of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners in Burma. Amnesty International USA urges the Senate to pass the [BURMA Act](#) included in the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R.2500), to limit military cooperation between the U.S. and Myanmar and to apply sanctions to perpetrators of human rights abuses.



*Above: Sokhina Khatun, who is around 90 years old, stands in her shelter in Camp #1 East, Bangladesh in February. Myanmar soldiers shot and killed her husband and two grandchildren while they fled Bangladesh in 2017.*

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## 7) Thailand – In Upcoming Visit, Secretary Pompeo Must Press Thai Government to Uphold Free and Fair Elections

Amnesty International urges Secretary Pompeo to press the Thai government to end the ongoing crack-down against political opposition. Since June, there have been threats from the junta leader to stage a coup, and a brutal attack on a pro-democracy leader.

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### What's Coming Down the Pike?

#### July 24

At 9 am in Rayburn 2359, Executive Director Margaret Huang will testify before the House Appropriations Health and Human Services Subcommittee [hearing](#) on Amnesty International USA's new report about the child detention facility in Homestead, Florida.

At 4:30 pm in Dirksen G11, Asia Advocacy Manager Francisco Bencosme will moderate a Senate Human Rights Caucus [panel](#) on religious freedom in China and the role of surveillance technology in abuses against Uyghurs.

#### July 25

At 10 am, Asia Advocacy Manager Francisco Bencosme will testify before the House Foreign Affairs Asia Subcommittee hearing on human rights in southeast Asia.

At 2 pm, Amnesty International USA will co-host a [panel](#) on human rights abuses in Myanmar, focusing specifically on conditions in IDP camps. The event, entitled "Myanmar's Human Rights Crisis: Images from the Ground Informing Policy on the Hill," will include a photo exhibit of camp conditions, as well as remarks from House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Engel.

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