

# HUMAN RIGHTS ON CAPITOL HILL

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### WHAT'S COMING DOWN THE PIKE?

*U.S.-Mexico Border* - November 22, 2 pm: Amnesty International USA's Americas Advocacy Director Charanya Krishnaswami will testify at a House Foreign Affairs Committee [hearing](#) on the Remain in Mexico policy and humanitarian conditions at the U.S. southern border.

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## THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

**Turkey/Syria - Amnesty International Demands that Turkey Suspend its Military Offensive in Northern Syria.** On November 11, Amnesty International USA's Executive Director published an [op-ed](#) in the Washington Post on President Erdogan's November 13 White House [meeting](#) with President Trump. Despite the Turkish government's insistence that the military operation was necessary to stop terrorism and secure peace, it has devastated civilians. During the offensive in Syria, Turkish military forces and a coalition of Turkey-backed Syrian armed groups committed [serious violations and war crimes](#), including summary killings and [unlawful attacks](#) that killed and injured civilians. As of November 11, up to [300,000 people](#) were at risk of displacement. Erdogan has also made clear his intentions to repatriate up to [3.6 million Syrian refugees](#) to the newly created so-called "[safe zone](#)" or "[buffer zone](#)" in Syria. Amnesty International demands that Turkey not deport Syrian refugees as it violates their human rights and international legal standards. For more information on Syria, contact Philippe Nassif at [pnassif@aiusa.org](mailto:pnassif@aiusa.org).

*Turkish Authorities Arrest Nearly 300 Citizens in Crackdown Against Dissent.* Since Turkey's military offensive in Syria in October, Turkish authorities have detained [267 people and investigated 839 social media accounts](#) for commenting or reporting on the incursion. Turkish authorities have accused journalists, social media users and protesters of "terrorism" and subjected them to [criminal investigation, arbitrary detention and travel bans](#). Amnesty International is calling on Turkish authorities to end the crackdown on dissenters. For more information on Turkey, contact Daniel Balson at [dbalson@aiusa.org](mailto:dbalson@aiusa.org).



*Above: On November 13 President Erdogan met with President Trump at the White House following Turkey's military incursion into northern Syria.*

On October 31, the Helsinki Commission held a hearing on “The Human Toll of Turkey’s Policy at Home and Abroad.” Amnesty International USA submitted a [statement](#) highlighting the rapidly deteriorating human rights crisis in Syria and how Turkey’s incursion into Syria constitutes war crimes.

## MAJOR MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

**a) Israel/Palestine - Secretary Pompeo’s Announcement on Israeli Settlements Violates Geneva Conventions and International Consensus on Illegality of Settlements.** Secretary Pompeo’s November 19 [announcement](#) places the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank at increased risk by giving Israel the green light to continue with its settlement building and expansion policy which contributes to the human rights crisis in the area. The construction and maintenance of settlements in the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, breaches international law and amounts to war crimes. Amnesty International calls on Israel to immediately cease all settlement activity as a first step to dismantling all Israeli settlements and related infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (“OPT”) and relocating Israeli civilians living in such settlements outside of the OPT.

**b) Iran – Iranian Security Forces Must Stop Using Excessive Force on Peaceful Protesters.** As of November 19, Iranian security forces have [killed at least 106 protesters in 21 cities](#). The death toll may be much higher, with some reports suggesting as many as 200 have been killed. Iranian security forces have committed unlawful killings and used excessive force to crush largely peaceful protests in more than 100 cities across Iran sparked by a hike in fuel prices on November 15. Iranian authorities must immediately end the brutal crackdown and ensure the rights to free assembly and expression are respected by ending the internet shutdown.

**c) Saudi Arabia – Amnesty International Condemns Saudi Arabia’s Announcement Categorizing Feminism, Homosexuality and Atheism as Extremist Ideas.** On November 12, Saudi Arabia’s state security agency [announced](#) that feminism, homosexuality, and atheism would be officially categorized as “extremist ideas.” This announcement is extremely dangerous and has serious implications for the rights to free expression. Amnesty International calls on the U.S. to pressure Saudi Arabia to protect free expression and to release jailed human rights defenders.

**d) Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces Must Stop Using Excessive Force on Peaceful Protesters.** In late October, Iraqi security forces and anti-riot police [opened fire](#) on peaceful protesters with live ammunition and tear gas. As of November 11, violence from the protests [killed 319 and injured 15,000 people](#). The U.S. must press the Iraqi government to investigate these events and ensure all those responsible are held accountable for their actions.

**e) Lebanon – Lebanese Authorities Must Stop Using Excessive Force on Peaceful Protesters.** Since October 18, [Lebanese security forces](#) have [used excessive force](#) to disperse overwhelmingly [peaceful protests](#), including by firing huge amounts of tear gas into crowds, chasing protesters

down streets and alleys at gunpoint and beating them. On October 26, the Lebanese army open fired to [disperse protests](#) in northern Lebanon, seriously injuring at least two people. The U.S. must pressure the Lebanese government to protect protesters and their right to free expression.

**f) Libya – Congress Should Pass the Libya Stabilization Act.** This legislation ([H.R. 4644](#)) supports a peaceful diplomatic resolution to the Libyan conflict. In late October, Amnesty International [documented](#) evidence of potential war crimes by both the UN-backed Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army, who have been fighting in and around Tripoli. This legislation will help deter foreign interference in Libya and prevent the continued supply of weapons, which violate the UN arms embargo.

**g) Afghanistan – Congress Should Pass the Afghan Women’s Inclusion in Negotiations Act.** On October 23, Amnesty International co-hosted a Capitol Hill briefing to press Congress to affirm support for women and girls in Afghanistan and develop policy solutions that will protect them as U.S. troops leave Afghanistan. Amnesty International USA urges Congress to pass the Afghan Women’s Inclusion in Negotiations Act ([H.R. 4097](#)), which mandates the creation of a plan that prioritizes women as part of any reconstruction efforts. After nearly 18 years of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and hundreds of billions of dollars spent, Congress [must ensure](#) that Afghan women are included in the peace process.

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