

HUMAN RIGHTS ON CAPITOL HILL

JANUARY 8, 2020



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Amnesty International has identified eight bipartisan and bicameral bills that Congress can and should pass in early 2020. Many have already passed one chamber and require just a small push to get over the finish line. We urge Congress to act swiftly to uphold human rights at home and abroad.

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WHAT'S COMING DOWN THE PIKE?

January 9, 11 am, 2200 Rayburn: Amnesty International will host a Congressional briefing on the human rights crisis and security situation in Libya featuring weapons expert and Libya investigator Brian Castner. For more information contact Philippe Nassif (pnassif@aiusa.org).

January 27: Amnesty International Legislative Coordinators will lobby on Capitol Hill

CELEBRATIONS

Amnesty International Thanks Lawmakers for Helping Secure the Release of Human Rights Defender Omoyele Sowore

Amnesty International USA Honored as Top Grassroots Lobbyists in 2019

1) MAJOR INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT

India – Amnesty International Calls on Indian Government to Repeal Anti-Muslim Citizenship Law and to End Crackdown on Protests. In December the Indian Parliament passed the [Citizenship Amendment Act](#), which grants citizenship to undocumented immigrants of several faiths, but excludes Muslims. Amnesty International has called on the Indian government to repeal the bill as it discriminates on the basis of religion, a clear violation of India's constitution and international human rights law. Massive protests broke out across India. In response, the Indian government imposed an indefinite curfew, suspended mobile and internet services, and deployed security forces in various states. Some state governments have detained those protesting against the Act or imposed prohibitory orders. Security forces beat student protestors at Aligarh Muslim University, injuring more than 100 students, and police blocked ambulances from going inside the university to help the wounded students. The Indian Government and state governments must end [excessive use of force](#) by police and uphold the right to [peaceful protests](#).

2) WHAT MUST CONGRESS DO IN 2020 TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS ACROSS THE WORLD?

Review of 2010s and Looking Ahead to 2020 - Amnesty International reflects on [human rights battlegrounds](#): from uprisings across the Arab world and the rise of global protest movements, to the resurgence of the politics of hate, and concerns over the misuse of big data and surveillance technology, the 2010s have opened up new frontiers in the fight for our rights. As we move into a new decade, governments must protect us from further human rights abuses, including from

corporations, Big Tech and the climate crisis.

Key Human Rights Legislation (Bipartisan, Bicameral) That Must Get Over the Finish Line in 2020 -

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a) Asia

China – Congressional Action to Hold Chinese Government Accountable for Detention Uyghurs Long Overdue. [Leaked documents](#) obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists reveal how the Chinese government built the Xinjiang facilities to detain hundreds of thousands of predominantly Muslim ethnic groups. The leaks showcase the horrors of the Chinese government's campaign against the Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other ethnic Muslims. In December, AIUSA's Board of Directors sent a [letter](#) to Senate leadership calling for immediate passage of the legislation. The Senate must come to an agreement with the House to pass the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act (S.178) led by Senators Rubio (R-FL) and Menendez (D-NJ).



Above: Amnesty International is campaigning on behalf of Yiliyasijiang Reheman, a Uyghur who has been missing for over two years and is presumed to be detained in the Xinjiang province.

Kashmir – Indian Government Must End Militaristic Measures and Lift the Internet Blackout in Kashmir. In August 2019, the Indian government decided to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional autonomy and split the two territories under the control of the federal government. Since then, security forces have detained protesters, imposed curfews and travel restrictions and cut off all communication methods, including phone access to the internet. While recently some communication has been lifted, the prolonged internet blackout has impacted students, professionals, journalists, activists and emergency services in the region and prepaid phone

service, broadband and mobile internet services still remain blocked. Congress must pass the bipartisan India human resolution ([H.Res.745](#)), led by Representatives Jayapal (D-WA-7) and Watkins (R-KS-2), to call on the Indian government to end its restrictions on free religion and information.

Myanmar – Senior Myanmar Officials Must Be Held Accountable for Crimes Against Humanity. In 2019, Gambia asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to rule on provisional measures ‘to protect the rights of the Rohingya group’ and prevent all acts that amount to or contribute to the crime of genocide against the community, pending formal hearings on the formal case that Myanmar has breached its obligations under the UN Genocide Convention. Amnesty International’s investigations identified [13 senior officials](#), including Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar military Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, as warranting investigation and prosecution for crimes against the Rohingya. In December, Senators Blackburn (R-TN) and Durbin (D-IL) sent a [letter](#) calling for Myanmar to cooperate with the ICJ. The Senate must swiftly pass the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act ([S. 1186](#)) led by Senators Cardin (D-MD) and Young (R-IN) and the BURMA Act ([H.R.3190](#)) led by Representatives Engel (D-NY-16) and Chabot (R-OH-1).

b) Africa

Libya – Congress Must Support a Peaceful Diplomatic Solution to the Libyan Conflict. The Libya Stabilization Act ([H.R. 4644](#), [S. 2934](#)) strengthens U.S. policy in support of a peaceful diplomatic solution to the Libyan conflict and to deter foreign interference in Libya. Currently the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Russia are supporting the forces of General Haftar in Libya, and more recently Turkey has decided to send troops in support of the UN recognized government in Tripoli. Among the Turkish support are Syrian rebels. The conflict has displaced tens of thousands and forces on all sides have committed war crimes, with civilians paying the heaviest price from the fighting. Amnesty International calls on Congress to pass this bipartisan legislation led by Representatives Deutch (D-FL-22) and Wilson (R-SC-2), and Senators Coons (D-DE) and Graham (R-SC).

Cameroon – Cameroonian Government and Armed Groups Must Uphold Human Rights and End Violent Conflict. Amnesty International USA urges the Senate to agree to [S.Res. 292](#) to call on the Cameroonian government and armed separatist groups to end all violence and respect the human rights of Cameroonians. The Cameroonian government has repeatedly cracked down on political opposition and restricted freedoms of expression by shutting down the internet and harassing or detaining journalists and political opponents. This resolution, already agreed to in the House, is led by Senators Cardin (D-MD) and Young (R-IN).

c) Americas

Venezuela - Senate Vote on Venezuela Temporary Protected Status Act Long Overdue. Over 10 percent of Venezuelans has been forced to flee the massive and widespread human rights crisis in Venezuela, which shows no signs of ceasing. Venezuelans in the U.S. are still exposed to risk

of deportation because the U.S. government has failed to act to protect them. The Venezuela TPS Act ([S. 636](#)) would allow Venezuelans to qualify for temporary protected status and obtain work permits and travel authorization. The Senate must pass this bipartisan legislation led by Senators Menendez (D-NJ) and Rubio (R-FL), which the House already passed in July.



Above: Since early 2019, Venezuelan security forces has used unlawful lethal force, detained and repressed protesters who have spoken out against the Venezuelan government.

U.S. - Additional Funding for Research is Needed to Prevent Gun Violence and Empower Communities. On December 16, Amnesty International USA [welcomed](#) Congress's historic decision to fund gun violence prevention research for the first time in 25 years. Congress approved \$25 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct research on the gun violence crisis, but [more needs to be done](#). Restrictions on federal legislation have had a substantial negative effect on gun violence research and, for over two decades, researchers, policy makers, and experts have been inadequately resourced to fill huge gaps in knowledge about the causes, consequences, and prevention of gun violence in the U.S. In addition to passing Universal Background Checks ([S. 42](#)), the Disarm Hate Act ([H.R. 2708](#), [S. 1462](#)) and the Assault Weapons Ban ([H.R. 1296](#), [S. 66](#)), Congress should pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Act ([S. 2671](#), [H.R. 4836](#)), which would support community-led violence reduction initiatives in communities of color that have high levels of gun violence.

U.S. - Justice Department Must Provide Accountability for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. On some reservations, native women are murdered at more than 10 times the national average and are twice as likely to experience sexual crimes. Savanna's Act ([S. 227](#), [H.R. 2733](#)) directs the DOJ to develop protocols to address missing and murdered Indigenous women. This legislation is necessary to better investigate cases and train tribal law enforcement agencies as they often lack necessary resources. This bipartisan legislation is led by Senators Murkowski (R-AK) and Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Representatives Torres (D-CA-35) and Newhouse (R-WA-4).

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On Monday, January 27, 2020 Amnesty International Legislative Coordinators from across the country will lobby on Capitol Hill. They will urge their Members of Congress to pass Savanna's Act (S. 227, H.R. 2733), which directs the Department of Justice to review, revise, and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address missing and murdered Indigenous people, while also pushing Congress to take meaningful steps to end gun violence through support and passage of a package of bills which include the Background Check Expansion Act (S. 42, H.R. 8), Break the Cycle of Violence Act (S. 2671, H.R. 4836), and the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act (S. 506, H.R. 1236).

4) CELEBRATIONS

Amnesty International Thanks Members of Congress for Helping Secure the Release of Human Rights Defender Omoyele Sowore. The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission nominated Nigerian journalists and Prisoners of Conscious Omoyele Sowore, Olawale Bakare and Agba Jalingo to the Defending Freedoms Initiative. Amnesty International thanks Senators [Booker](#) (D-NJ) and [Menendez](#) (D-NJ), Representative Gottheimer (D-NJ-5) and the State Department for calling for Sowore's release. Sowore was released on bail on December 24.

Amnesty International USA Honored as Top Grassroots Lobbyists in 2019. The Hill named Amnesty lobbyists Joanne Lin, Philippe Nassif, and Daniel Balson to its [2019 top lobbyist list](#).

5) FULL JANUARY NEWSLETTER

For more human rights updates in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East and Eurasia, see our full January newsletter [here](#).

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