

October 27, 2020

An Open Letter to All U.S. Federal, State, and Local Officials:

We write you today with grave concern about the future of the United States.

For nearly 60 years, Amnesty International has documented how racism, discrimination, and hate can lead to widespread violence and further disregard for human rights. We've monitored the unraveling of norms, laws, and rules around the world—and are deeply troubled by what we see happening in the United States. The widespread availability of guns in this country combined with the incitement to violence and the enabling and abetting of white supremacy—at the highest levels of government and by those elected to serve the people—has left the country dangerously vulnerable to those who prefer inequity to fairness, hate over unity, and impunity over justice.

Amnesty International and others have exposed widespread and egregious human rights violations committed by officials throughout the United States. Many of you are directly responsible. Others have done too little or nothing at all to stop these abuses.

The world is watching. We demand you meet your obligations under international law to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of all people, including the following:

- Freedom from racism, discrimination, and hate
- Freedom to peacefully protest and dissent
- Freedom from police violence and gun violence
- Freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention
- Freedom of the press to investigate and report the truth
- Freedom from armed intimidation at the polls

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACTING SECRETARY WOLF:

- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must not deploy law enforcement personnel from DHS agencies to participate in the policing of assemblies or polling stations, as they are not adequately trained in the human rights-compliant policing of public assemblies.
- DHS must continue to monitor and publish reports on the actions of Domestic Violent Extremists.
- Publicly denounce xenophobic rhetoric and incitement to violence, and condemn white supremacist, extremist, and armed private groups using discriminatory language and hateful rhetoric as a danger to public safety. Make it clear that such armed private groups are NOT authorized to protect the public, and that they pose a risk to the human rights and public safety of others.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ATTORNEY GENERAL BARR:

- The Department of Justice (DOJ) must investigate and prosecute unlawful detention, use of force, and other vigilantism by armed groups.
- DOJ must expand the use of pattern-and-practice investigations and consent decrees, with the goal of decreasing excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel and other acts of misconduct.

- DOJ must direct the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to continue to monitor and public reports on the actions of Domestic Violent Extremists.
- DOJ must review and review DOJ guidelines to law enforcement agencies on the policing of protests, in conformity with international human rights standards on policing.
- DOJ must provide urgent training for law enforcement agencies on how to facilitate freedom of peaceful assembly, without discrimination, particularly in the context of volatile counter-protest situations.
- DOJ must provide urgent training to law enforcement agencies on the lawful use of force, particularly in public assemblies, in line with international standards on legality, necessity and proportionality.
- DOJ must enforce and expand the use of consent decrees, with the goal of decreasing excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel.
- DOJ must review and revise the DOJ's *Guidance on the Use of Race* by law enforcement officials to include a comprehensive ban on racial profiling by federal and state law enforcement agencies.
- DOJ must fully implement the Death in Custody Reporting Act of 2014.
- Publicly denounce xenophobic rhetoric and incitement to violence, and condemn white supremacist, extremist, and armed private groups using discriminatory language and hateful rhetoric as a danger to public safety. Make it clear that such armed private groups are NOT authorized to protect the public, and that they pose a risk to the human rights and public safety of others.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SECRETARY OF STATE POMPEO:

- The Department of State (DOS) must extend invitations for US country visits to the special rapporteurs and independent experts of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, particularly those with specialized mandates on freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the conduct of law enforcement officials.
- DOS must extend invitations for US country visits to human rights monitors of the Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, particularly to conduct monitoring and/or trainings of US law enforcement officials on human rights-compliant policing of assemblies.
- Publicly denounce xenophobic rhetoric and incitement to violence, and condemn white supremacist, extremist, and armed private groups using discriminatory language and hateful rhetoric as a danger to public safety. Make it clear that such armed private groups are NOT authorized to p

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PRESIDENT TRUMP:

- The President must not deploy military personnel to participate in the policing of assemblies or polling stations, as they are not adequately trained in domestic law enforcement or the human rights-compliant policing of public assemblies. If military personnel are ever deployed for law enforcement purposes, they must act under the same law enforcement standards, rules and policies, and be under the strategic and operational command of the police.
- Publicly denounce xenophobic rhetoric and incitement to violence, and condemn white supremacist, extremist, and armed private groups using discriminatory language and hateful rhetoric as a danger to public safety. Make it clear that such armed private groups are NOT authorized to protect the public, and that they pose a risk to the human rights and public safety of others.

Amnesty International takes no position for or against any political ideology, party, candidate, or official. As the world's largest grassroots human rights organization—more than 10 million supporters—our sole purpose is the promotion and defense of freedom, equality, justice, dignity, and human rights worldwide.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International USA
www.amnestyusa.org/freedom

