



January 8, 2021

An Open Letter to U.S. Mayors, Governors and State Attorneys General:

Amnesty International USA is deeply concerned by reports that armed white supremacist groups and individuals are planning further disruption across the country over the coming days. We urge you to do everything in your power and within human rights standards and obligations to protect people from violence by these armed groups and individuals, and to condemn white supremacy.

For nearly 60 years, Amnesty International has documented how racism, discrimination, and hate can lead to widespread violence and 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, including the violent mob that stormed the Capitol on January 6th in Washington DC.

The widespread availability of and lack of uniform restrictions on guns in the United States combined with incitement to violence and the enabling and abetting of white supremacy at the highest levels of government has left the country dangerously vulnerable to those who prefer inequity to fairness, hate over unity, and impunity over justice.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has already documented political violence at public assemblies across the country by armed groups with ties to white nationalism. In its annual threat assessment, the US Department of Homeland Security also warned in October 2020 that what they call “domestic violent extremists”—particularly white supremacist armed groups—could target elections-related protests and mass gatherings with political violence.

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

- Publicly condemn and demand accountability for incitement to violence and the enabling and abetting of white supremacy at the highest levels of government, including by President Trump and other government officials
- Publicly condemn armed and violent groups and individuals as a threat to public safety and human rights, and speak out against white supremacy, discrimination, xenophobic rhetoric and incitement to violence by such groups and individuals
- Issue executive orders, emergency orders, or other temporary special measures to prevent armed white supremacist individuals or groups from intimidating or threatening people
- Temporarily prohibit the open and concealed carry of firearms in Capitol buildings and in public, including parks, recreational areas, religious institutions, schools, and other gathering spaces

- Direct police departments to adopt and follow Amnesty International's best practices on the policing of demonstrations, and ensure that all law enforcement agencies facilitate freedom of peaceful assembly, without discrimination, particularly in the context of volatile counter-protest situations, with commitments to ensuring transparent investigation and prosecution of unlawful use of force, and vigilantism by armed groups: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/good-practice-for-law-enforcement-officials-policing-demonstrations>

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

We'd welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our concerns and recommendations in more detail. Please contact Zeke Johnson, National Director of Campaigns, at campaigns@aiusa.org

Sincerely,

Amnesty International USA
www.amnestyusa.org