

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LETTER

President Cyril Ramaphosa
The Presidency
Union Building
Government Avenue
Pretoria
0002

Re: Your trip to Washington, D.C.

Dear President Ramaphosa,

As you prepare to travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Biden, we at Amnesty International wanted to highlight ongoing concerns with human rights issues in the United States. The Biden Administration has acknowledged its own flaws and shortcomings, indicating they are open to learning from partners who have also faced domestic human rights challenges. Given South Africa's own experiences on the issues highlighted below, we hope you will raise these issues with President Biden during your meeting.

Access to Abortion: On 24 June 2022 the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion, a right that had existed in the United States for nearly half a century. Since the ruling, 12 states have totally or near-totally banned abortion, and dozens of other states are moving to institute restrictive legislation that will severely restrict the rights and lives of women, girls, and people who can get pregnant in the United States. The power to fully legalize abortion lies with the US Congress, but the President has limited, but critical powers, to support abortion access in the meantime. President Biden has taken executive action but has the power to do more. South Africa codified the right to abortion in 1996 with the Choice in Termination of Pregnancy Act and was one of the most liberal examples of abortion legislation globally at its time. Given South Africa's own leading example and the impact the Supreme Court ruling has had on access to health not just in the United States but also globally, **we urge you to press President Biden to declare a national health emergency to protect abortion access in the United States.**

Access to Humanitarian Protection: As the world is facing a global refugee crisis, it is imperative for the United States to step up and ensure that people seeking safety have their rights upheld. Despite setting a lofty goal to resettle 125,000 refugees in fiscal year 2022, the Biden Administration has only resettled a small fraction of that number. And since the start of the pandemic, Title 42 (a Covid-19 border policy used to expel migrants and asylum seekers on public health grounds) has been misused to expel hundreds of thousands of individuals and families arriving at U.S. borders to exercise their human right to seek asylum.

Title 42 harms and punishes asylum-seekers in an attempt to deter them from exercising their human right to seek asylum, and disproportionately impacts Black, Brown, and Indigenous asylum seekers. **We urge you to press the Biden Administration to immediately restore access to asylum at the border, and set a goal of resettling 200,000 refugees in fiscal year 2023.**

Gun Violence: As in South Africa, the gun violence crisis in the United States is only growing worse. When South Africa passed the Firearms Control Act in 2004 it significantly restricted access to firearms and has measures many would like to see federally in the United States. President Biden has worked to pass more restrictive gun control measures but has struggled to get legislation through Congress. In your meeting at the White House and in any meetings with Members of Congress **we urge you to press for the passage of the Break the Cycle of Violence Act and Assault Weapon Ban;** sharing your own witnessing of the destruction of military style weapons on people and the importance of safe communities everywhere.

Covid-19 Tests and Treatments: South Africa has shown leadership at the World Trade Organisation regarding equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, testing and treatment while the US and EU have prioritized the pharmaceutical industry's interests over making sure everyone around the globe has access to tests and therapies, regardless of where they live. We urge you to press President Biden to support the expansion of the Ministerial Conference 12 waiver decision to go beyond Covid-19 vaccines and apply to tests and treatments. We also request you urge the President to unilaterally refrain from using WTO or other trade and investment dispute mechanisms to stop or dissuade countries from producing, distributing or using Covid-19 medical technologies as needed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International