

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

Issue Briefing & Lobbying 101



VIRTUAL COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

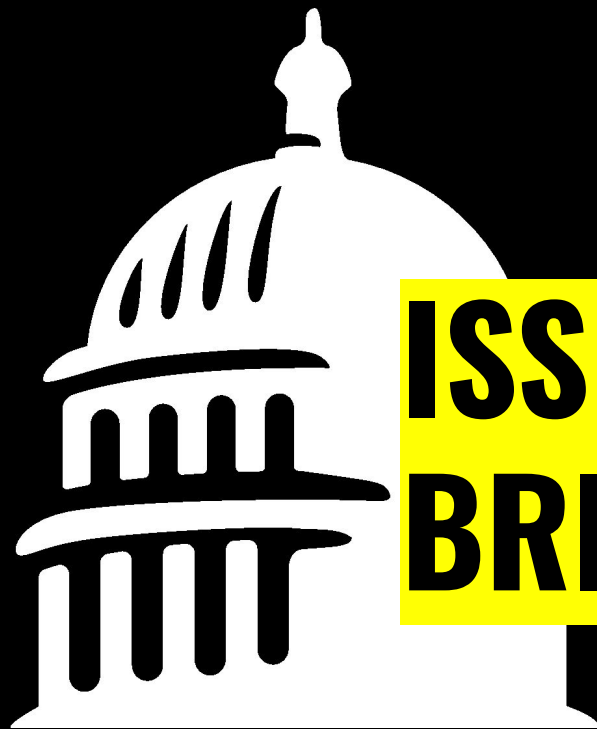
At AIUSA, we are dedicated to fostering a virtual community that is open to learning and incorporating IDEA values into our work spaces. Members of our virtual community agree to incorporate these principles into each of our interactions.

General

- Observe the six following bullet points for Inclusive Behavior, including:
 - Manage your biases and behaviors
 - Manage speaking time and make space for different voices
 - Respecting and learning from different perspectives
 - Understanding the difference between intent and impact (assume good intent and take responsibility for your impact)
 - Listen to understand, rather than to just respond
- No exclusionary or harassing speech is allowed. This includes “calling-out” in a way that puts someone on the spot or shames

Large-Group Video Calls

- When possible, join calls by video and stay on mute when not speaking.
- Use the reaction features on the platform to share your reactions
- Follow the host’s directions about how to use the chat function
- Use the same guidelines for the chat feature as you would for email as they are both forms of public written communication
- Some questions, comments or feedback may be better shared offline or in a 1:1 conversation rather than on the call; determine the best course of action accordingly
- Recognize that there are different comfort levels and technological circumstances with virtual participation, so have patience and flexibility



ISSUE

BRIEFING

ADVOCATING FOR INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

A large, dark silhouette of a classical building dome, likely a state capitol, occupies the right side of the image. It features a series of vertical columns supporting the base of the dome and a small finial at the top.

*Andrew Fandino, Advocacy Director for Individuals
at Risk*

Definitions

- **Individuals at Risk:** A person or community who is at risk of human rights violations.
- **Human Rights Defenders:** An individual or group who acts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means.
- **Prisoner of Conscience:** a person who has been wrongfully detained for what they say or believe or who they are and have not advocated hatred or violence or used violence in the circumstances leading up to their imprisonment.



Senate - The Global Voices of Freedom Act (S. 962)

- **In March 2023, the Senate introduced** the strongest piece of legislation on Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in US history.
- **Things to know:**
 - **Senate ask only:** no House version. House version will not be introduced until much later and this information will be shared once available.
 - 25th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders



House - Join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

- The **Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC)** is a bipartisan Commission in the House of Representatives.
- The TLHRC holds briefings and hearings on different human rights topics for members of Congress and their staff . Commission members often join forces on joint letters, cosponsorship of resolutions, and on other human rights initiatives.
- The TLHRC is open to all Representatives. It costs nothing to join and does not commit members in advance to support any particular action.
- **Amnesty International USA recommends that all members of the House Representatives join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.**



House/Senate - Join the Defending Freedoms Project

- In 2012, The TLHRC, in conjunction with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and Amnesty International USA, created the **Defending Freedoms Project (DFP)** to support Prisoners of Conscience around the world.
- In recent years, the DFP has expanded to include Reporters without Borders, Freedom House, Freedom Now, Scholars at Risk, PEN America, and the Senate Human Rights Caucus.
- Please direct offices to reach out to **Andrew Fandino** (afandino@aiusa.org) if they are interested in sponsoring a Prisoner of Conscience through the DFP.



CONGRESSIONAL STRATEGY



HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN UKRAINE

A dark silhouette of the United States Capitol dome is positioned on the right side of the image, set against a dark grey background. The dome's iconic features, including its tiered base and the top finial, are clearly visible in the silhouette.

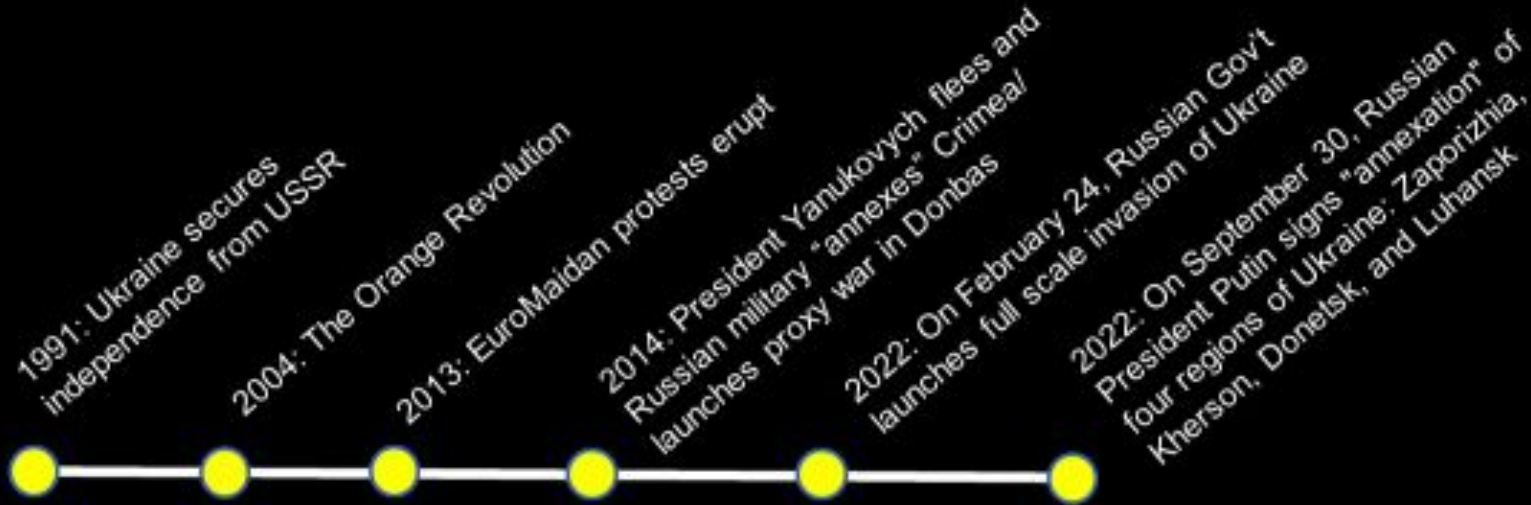
Daniel Balson, Advocacy Director for Europe & Central Asia

Speaker



Daniel Balson is Advocacy Director for Europe and Central Asia for Amnesty International USA. Daniel works with U.S. government representatives in Congress and the Executive Branch to ensure that human rights are prioritized and protected. Before coming to AIUSA, Daniel worked on financial sector and democracy development across Eurasia. Before that, he worked as a management consultant. He is a native Russian speaker, a fluent Spanish speaker and conversational in Hebrew and Arabic. His writing has been published in the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The Hill, and many other outlets.

Russia in Ukraine: Occupation and Resistance



The Humanitarian Crisis

The catastrophic consequence of Russia's aggression



- 8 million Ukrainian refugees; 5 million Ukrainian IDPs (1/3rd of Ukraine's population)
- Millions without electricity
- 6 million Ukrainians in areas with limited water infrastructure
- 1/10 Ukrainian hospitals damaged from Russian attack
- One in three families in Ukraine (11 million people) food insecure



Older People in Ukraine

Disproportionate Risk

- 34% of deaths, 28% of injuries
- 30% of casualties (2014 – 2022)
- Health Crisis (no medication in occupied areas)



Older People in Ukraine

The problems with institutions

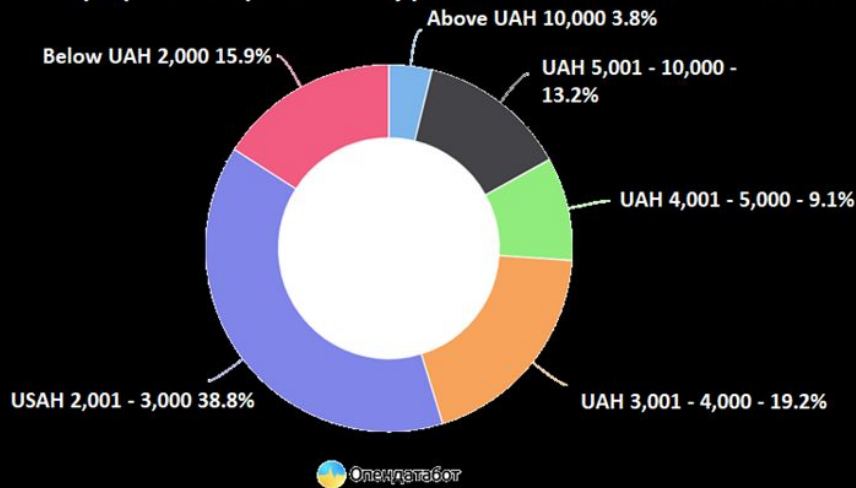
- Low staffing ratios (4 caretakers to up to 50-60 residents)
- 99% of people with mobility issues not moved
- People with psychosocial disabilities particularly subject to abuse
- Isolation/limited movement
- Discrimination against older people specifically



A Crisis of Poverty

Forcing older Ukrainians into institutions

The proportion of pensioners by pension size in their overall numbers



- Universal Pensions
- 80% receive pensions below subsistence level
 - Real subsistence level = 4,666 UAH (126 USD)
 - Half receive less than 3,000 UAH (82 USD)
 - Inflation 20%+, food 37%+
 - Skyrocketing rents
- Women 30% lower pensions
- Cash assistance insufficient

Forcible Transfer

A war crime and likely crime against humanity

- Older people vulnerable to forcible transfer
- Stranded in Russia or Russian-occupied areas
- Imposition of Russian citizenship
- Many men of military age in particular are arbitrarily detained, tortured, held in inhuman conditions
- Children separated from parents



Political Context

Growing “Ukraine fatigue” in Congress

- U.S. humanitarian assistance is the difference between life and death
- \$3.9 billion in humanitarian assistance (food, health care, refugee support)
- \$26.4 billion in financial support (grants, loans and cooperative agreements to support trade, strengthen judiciary, protect human rights, etc)
- Support for Ukraine remains strong – but growing number of elected officials are opposing continued assistance
- We can and must stop Congress from abandoning Ukrainians. As their constituent, **YOU** have the power to influence them.

CONGRESSIONAL STRATEGY



What else can you do? Taking Action

- Sign and share the online petition to your two federal Senators and Representative at www.amnestyusa.org/ukrainecrisis
- Post the action on your social media accounts and on Twitter tagging the Russian Embassy in Washington, DC: @RusEmbUSA
- Write an op-ed or a Letter to the Editor for the local paper, or contact your local radio and television outlets to demand they cover this story.
- Provide opportunities for Ukrainians to share their stories: at your school, in your Amnesty group, in your house of worship, in your clubs.
- Support Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers in your community – visit Welcome.US to see how you can get involved.
- Go to www.amnestyusa.org/ukrainecrisis to learn more and take other actions

PROTECT THE PROTEST IN SRI LANKA



*Carolyn Nash, Advocacy Director for Asia/Pacific
Jim McDonald, AIUSA Country Specialist for Sri
Lanka*

THE PROBLEM

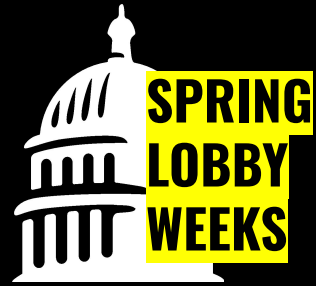
- In the last two years, the Sri Lankan government has intensified the crackdown on civil society.
- People from all walks of life, especially minority communities, have been threatened, intimidated, harassed, and jailed, simply for expressing views or doing their jobs in ways that displease the authorities.
- Sri Lankan authorities have used draconian counterterrorism laws such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) to detain individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression.
- Now, the authorities have proposed replacement legislation (the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA)) that is just as dangerous as the PTA - an effort to distract from their abuses.



THE PROBLEM: THE PTA

Introduced as a “temporary” measure in 1979, the PTA is an abusive law that has been used to crush dissent and forcibly disappear people, along with other violations.

- The PTA allows suspects to be detained up to a year without charge
- Persons arrested under the PTA do not have the right to be informed of the reasons for their arrest or to be brought promptly before a judge.
- The PTA facilitates torture by admitting at trial confessions obtained from suspects in custody.
- The offenses constituting “terrorism” under the PTA are ill-defined; these offenses have been abused in the past to target minorities, critics, and journalists.



THE PROBLEM: THE ATA

Proposed as a replacement to the PTA in March 2023, the ATA is just as dangerous to the Sri Lankan people and must not be enacted in its current form. Amnesty believes the bill would need substantial amendments to be brought in line with international standards:

- The offences in the antiterror bill remain broad, subjective and vague;
- The new bill still retains provisions to enable prolonged detention: Up to one year without charge;
- The bill facilitates torture, especially in a context that is rife with allegations of torture in custody;
- The bill empowers the military with powers that should only be provided to law enforcement (police);
- The bill retains unchecked powers of the executive without judicial oversight.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS ARGUMENT

- The PTA fails to meet international human rights standards
- It is a violation of **freedom of expression** and **the right to protest**
- The ATA is just as dangerous to the Sri Lankan people and must not be enacted in its current form

What the U.S. Congress Can Do

Congress must support protesters' rights in Sri Lanka by ensuring that the PTA is replaced with legislation that complies with Sri Lanka's obligation under International Law. The ATA must not be enacted in its current form. It must be substantially revised or dropped.

Recommendations to Members of Congress:

- Hold Congressional hearings;
- Pass a resolution calling for the repeal of the PTA;
- Support appropriations language;
- Contact Sri Lankan authorities
- Urge the Biden administration to speak out

CONGRESSIONAL STRATEGY







LOBBYING

101

*Larry Ladutke, AIUSA Legislative Coordinator for
New Jersey*

Lobbying 101

INTRODUCTION

PROCESS

PROBLEM SCENARIOS

Q&A

ROLE PLAY PRACTICE



Introduction

- Lobbying District Offices
- In person OR remote



Lobbying with Amnesty International USA

- Non-partisan
- Grassroots
- Global human rights movement.



Legislative Coordinators

Volunteers who:

- Act as a liaison between Amnesty members and elected officials.
- Train and mobilize activists.
- Know AIUSA's legislative priorities.

Email Grassroots@aiusa.org to be connected.



INTRODUCTION

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Q&A

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Process

SCHEDULING

PREPARING &

CONDUCTING

THE MEETING



Scheduling the meeting

- Figure out your target and schedule two weeks in advance.
- Request the meeting through web form, phone or email.
- Type of Meeting: In person, video, or conference call?
- Let them know the issues you be lobbying on and who will be attending.



Preparing the meeting

1. Learn:

- Familiarize yourself with the background information provided: this includes *Leave Behinds* and *Backgrounders*
- Research your elected official. Where do they stand on the issue?
- Is there something you can thank them for doing?



Preparing the meeting

2. Practice:

- Designate delegation members' roles.
- Practice making your “ask”, using talking points, and answering likely questions with your delegation.



Meeting tips

- Be on time.
- Dress appropriately (no campaign slogans!)
- Pay attention to lighting, background, etc. if meeting online.
- Do not record any part of the meeting.
- Take photos or screenshots only with permission.
- Remember staffers are human.



Meeting tips

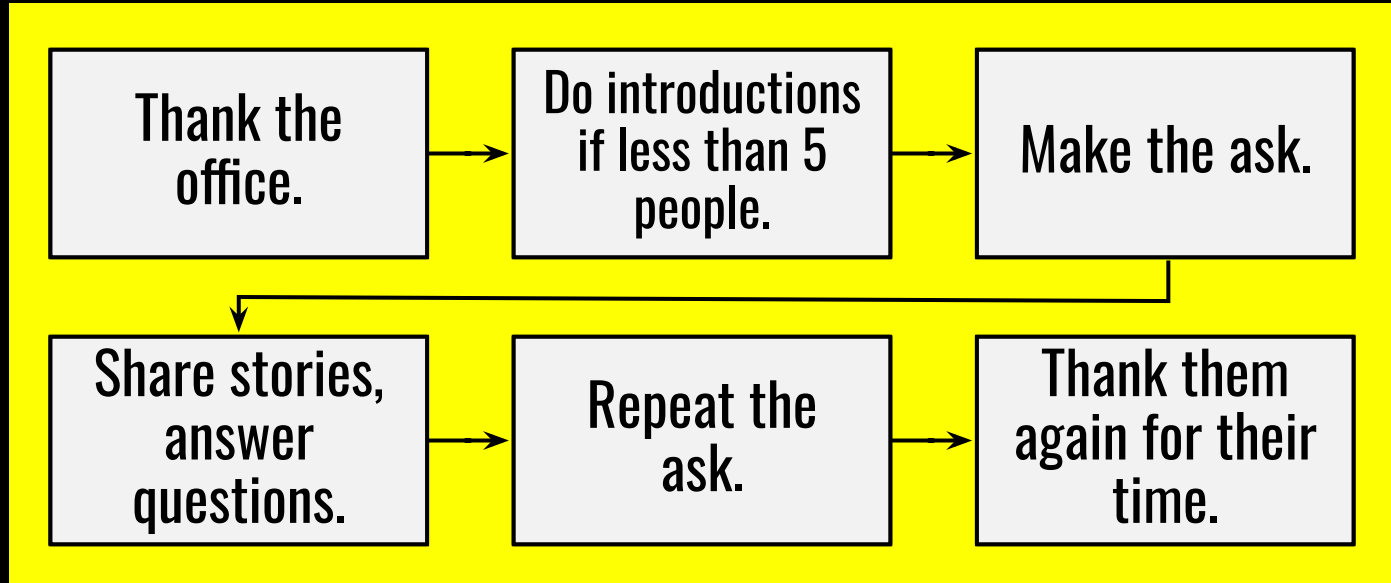
The ABCDs of lobbying

Be:

- **A**ccurate,
- **B**rief,
- **C**ourteous; and
- **D**evelop a relationship.



Lobby Visit Roadmap



After the meeting

- Send a thank you email and remind them when you agreed to follow up.
- Actually follow up as agreed upon to see where the office is on the issue.
- Post on social media about your day using #AmnestyLobby.

And most importantly...





***DON'T FORGET TO LOG YOUR MEETINGS AT
[AMNESTYUSA.ORG/DEBRIEF](https://www.amnestyusa.org/debrief)***

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ROLE PLAY PRACTICE



Problem Scenarios

1. Staffer doesn't show up:

- Give them some time. They may be on another call.
- Ask to be rescheduled.

2. Rude or indifferent staffer:

- Maintain composure.
- Remain courteous.

3. Tech troubles:

- Have a sense of humor.
- Plan in advance for backup solutions.

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ROLE PLAY PRACTICE



Role Play

practice

ROLES

TIPS

ROLEPLAY EXERCISE



Meeting Roles

- **MEETING LEAD:** Makes introductions and guides the meeting.
- **PRESENTER:** Makes the ask and gives background on the issue.
- **NOTE-TAKER:** Takes notes during the meeting and logs a thorough debrief note after.
- **TESTIMONIAL:** Provides specific examples that illustrate why the ask is necessary.



Practice Tips

- Designate roles
- Roleplay the meeting
- Practice until everyone is comfortable



IDEA lobbying with others

INCLUSION: Be intentional about making sure that everyone feels included, valued, seen, and heard.

DIVERSITY: Make sure everyone can be themselves authentically. Acknowledge and appreciate differences.

EQUITY: Recognize your privilege and pass the mic.

ACCESSIBILITY: Run through meetings in advance to recognize any accessibility challenges that exist.

Roleplay the meeting

- **Senate asks:**
 - Support the repeal of the PTA in Sri Lanka
 - Cosponsor the HRD Legislation
 - Join the Defending Freedoms Project.
- **House asks:**
 - Support the repeal of the PTA in Sri Lanka
 - Join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the Defending Freedoms Project.



Visit amnestyusa.org/lobbyaction

THANK YOU

