



Amnesty International

Group 524

October 2021



No October Meeting
Migrant Flights and Title 42 Expulsions
Death Penalty Urgent Action Update
Banned Books Week

Welcome

Well October weather has finally arrived and the days are noticeably shorter. As always our work continues. Planning is underway for this year's Write For Rights event in December and I hope to update you in the November newsletter. This month features actions concerning Haitian migrants, an update on a death penalty urgent action and writers in peril as part of Banned Books Week.

Migrant Deportation Flights and Title 42 expulsions

The practice of illegally deporting asylum seekers at the border is detailed on page 2 and a related appeal to President Biden is on page 3. Copies can be sent to DHS and our elected officials which are listed on page 4

Urgent Action: Ernest Johnson executed

Last month we wrote letters on behalf of Ernest Johnson. He was executed on October 5, 2021. An article from the BBC is included on page 5

Banned Books Week Continues

Online actions are continuing through October 31 to draw attention to people around the world who have been imprisoned, threatened, or murdered because of their writing, art, or other published work. In solidarity with the American Library Association (ALA) and organizations across the U.S. and around the world, Amnesty activists work to fight challenges to freedom of expression. Amnesty is highlighting six online action cases at <https://www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2021/>

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.
Meeting Location: Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA 15101



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).



BIDEN ADMINISTRATION MUST HOLD CBP OFFICERS ACCOUNTABLE AND RESTORE ACCESS TO ASYLUM FOR ALL HAITIAN MIGRANTS

In response to the mass deportation of Haitian migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border and horrific reports of Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) inhumane treatment against Black asylum-seekers, **Paul O'Brien, Executive Director at Amnesty International USA** said:

“The horrific conduct by CBP in Del Rio, Texas, including officers charging into crowds of Haitian asylum-seekers on horseback, violently dispersing them, taunting them, and forcing them away from safety, is reprehensible and underscores a deeper problem of systemic and racist treatment against Haitian and other Black migrants in the U.S. and at the southern border.

“Already, thousands of Haitians have been deported under Title 42, despite Haiti still reeling from sociopolitical instability – including the assassination of its president and increase in gang violence – and natural disasters in the past few months alone. Federal courts have already blocked expulsions of families under Title 42, and human rights, faith, and public health groups have called for an immediate end to the expulsions. These mass deportations demonstrate that the government is not committed to upholding the rights and wellbeing of the asylum-seekers they are sending back to danger.

“Though reports indicate that some Haitian children and families have been allowed to enter the U.S., the mass expulsions continue. Amnesty International USA reiterates its calls on the government to allow access to all asylum-seekers at the U.S. border, regardless of race, ethnicity, age or gender. The U.S. government has a moral and legal responsibility to welcome Haitians and all people who have fled their homes in search of safety, and the Biden Administration can and must do better.”

Amnesty International USA is calling on the Biden Administration to:

- Stop all deportation flights and expulsions under Title 42 that place Haitian and other Black asylum-seekers in danger if returned to their countries of origin.
- Immediately grant humanitarian parole to Haitian and other Black asylum-seekers at the southern border and restore access to asylum for all asylum-seekers – not just families and children – in accordance with international law and regardless of race, ethnicity or nationality.
- End the practice of interdictions, which place Haitian and other asylum-seekers at sea at harm if returned to their homes or held in immigration detention.
- Launch a swift and full independent investigation into the racist conduct and other abuses by CBP officers against Black asylum-seekers and refugees in Del Rio, TX.
- End the use of arbitrary, mass immigration detention, including phasing out Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contracts with private prison companies and county jails; and incorporating a presumption of liberty in all custody decisions such that asylum-seekers and immigrants are allowed to live in the U.S. as they navigate the immigration process, with the support of sponsors and community-based nonprofit programs if they need it.

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President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

I'm writing on behalf of Amnesty International with deep disappointment in the horrific treatment of Haitians by Customs and Border Protection and the Biden administration's aggressive expansion of Title 42 expulsions. The cruelty and racism in Del Rio cannot go unanswered.

If the U.S. truly aims to convince the world that its commitment to human rights and racial justice is sincere, then it cannot deport thousands of people who fear for their safety back to a country experiencing extreme instability.

I call on the Biden administration and my U.S. Senators and Representative to:

- Immediately halt any and all deportations to Haiti and Afghanistan, and end Title 42 expulsions that place Haitian, Black, and other asylum-seekers in danger if returned to their countries of origin
- Immediately grant humanitarian parole to Haitian and other Black asylum-seekers at the U.S. southern border and uphold the legal and moral obligation to restore access to asylum for all people seeking safety
- End the practice of interdictions, which place Haitian and other asylum-seekers at sea at harm if returned to their homes or held in immigration detention, whether in Guantanamo Bay or other detention facilities
- End the use of arbitrary, mass immigration detention, including phasing out Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contracts with private prison companies and county jails, and incorporating a presumption of liberty in all custody decisions such that asylum-seekers and immigrants are allowed to live in the U.S. as they navigate the immigration process, with the support of sponsors and community-based nonprofit programs if they need it

This is your time to reverse course and show leadership. People in the United States and around the world are watching you.

Thank you,

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Copy Addresses for the previous letter

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Senator Bob Casey
393 Russell S.O.B.
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Pat Toomey
455 Dirksen S.O.B.
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Mike Doyle
270 Cannon H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Conor Lamb
1224 Longworth H.O.B. 1224
Washington, DC 20515



Ernest Johnson Executed

A Missouri man has been executed for murder despite pleas for clemency by advocates who said he had an intellectual disability.

Ernest Johnson received a lethal injection on Tuesday after the US Supreme Court refused to consider a stay of execution earlier in the day. The 61-year-old's pleas for leniency had received support from **Pope Francis** and two members of Congress.

Johnson killed three convenience store workers in a 1994 robbery. Attorneys for Johnson argued he was ineligible for the death penalty because multiple IQ tests had shown he had the mental capacity of a child and read at a primary school level. Johnson, a black man, had been born with fetal alcohol syndrome after his mother drank heavily during her pregnancy. He had also been missing a fifth of his brain tissue since 2008 after undergoing surgery to remove a brain tumor.

Attorneys pointed to a 2002 Supreme Court ruling that asserts that using the death penalty against Americans with intellectual disabilities violates the Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution, which prohibits "cruel and unusual punishments". However, the US state's top court denied Johnson a stay of execution last year and refused to take up his case again. The state's Republican governor had also refused to block the sentence from being carried out.

Elected officials, racial justice activists and faith leaders joined the efforts to spare Johnson's life. A representative of **Pope Francis** - who in 2018 changed the teachings of the Catholic faith to officially oppose the death penalty in all circumstances - wrote last week to Missouri's governor that the pope "wishes to place before you the simple fact of Mr Johnson's humanity and the sacredness of all human life".

But on Monday, Governor Mike Parson announced the state would "deliver justice and carry out the lawful sentence Mr Johnson received in accordance with the Missouri Supreme Court's order". Writing in support of the execution, Attorney General Eric Schmitt said that the facts of Johnson's actions "plainly reflect the offender's ability to plan, strategize, calculate, and scheme effectively". Johnson had asked to be executed by firing squad but his request was denied by the Missouri Supreme Court, and he was instead executed by lethal injection.

In a handwritten statement before his death, Johnson apologized for his crimes and thanked his family, friends and lawyer for their support.

He is the first inmate to be put to death in the state since May 2020 and the seventh to be executed in the US this year, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.



BANNED BOOKS WEEK 2021

Each year during Banned Books Week, Amnesty International draws attention to people around the world who have been imprisoned, threatened, or murdered because of their writing, art, or other published work. In solidarity with the American Library Association (ALA) and organizations across the U.S. and around the world, Amnesty activists work to fight challenges to freedom of expression.

Banned Books Week 2021 is September 26 – October 2, but you can take online actions on the cases until October 31 at <https://www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2021/>

