



Amnesty International

Group 524

June 2022



No June Meeting Gun Violence Action World Refugee Day Ukraine

Welcome

I hope the start of summer is going well for all. This month's focus is on gun violence, refugees and Ukraine.

Gun Violence: Break The Cycle of Violence Act

See the details on this case on page 2 and a sample letter on page 3.

World Refugee Day

June 20 is World Refugee Day and action supporting them is detailed on page 4.

Amnesty's Ukraine Crisis Campaign

Amnesty has set up a page on their website to coordinate actions and information concerning Ukraine.

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/UkraineCrisis/> A new report detailing indiscriminate attacks on civilians is on pages 5 and 6.

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).



Break the Cycle of Violence Act

We all have the right to be safe from gun violence. But our leaders are failing in their duty to protect us –**last year was the deadliest gun violence year in the U.S. in decades.**

Too many kids and teens are losing their lives, and communities of color are disproportionately affected. This year is on track to be worse... unless we change the way we fight gun violence.

We've just launched a MAJOR campaign to call for Congress to pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Act (H.R. 4118, S. 2275), which would provide **\$5 billion in funding** for community violence prevention and intervention programs across the country. In city after city, these programs save lives and lower the number of gun homicides by nearly 50%.

These programs work because they are often staffed by community leaders who provide survivors and families with counseling, connections to critical services, conflict avoidance tactics, mediation and more. But with the pandemic and budget shortfalls, too many of them are losing funds.

Take Action: Urge your members of Congress to support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act. It's time to give community heroes the tools they need to help us all live free from gun violence!

Senator Robert Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Senator Patrick Toomey
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Conor Lamb
1224 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Michael Doyle
270 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

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Dear ,

As your constituent, I'm asking Congress to commit at least \$5 billion over the next 8 years to community gun violence prevention in the budget reconciliation bill or by passing the Break the Cycle of Violence Act.

Community-level firearm violence in the USA disproportionately impacts communities of color. Firearm homicide was the leading cause of death for black men and boys aged 15-34 in 2018, and it was the third leading cause of death for Latino men and boys in the same age range. The flood of gun sales in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to make the pandemic of gun violence even worse.

Research indicates that long-term, adequately funded, evidence-based projects tailored towards specific social, economic and cultural contexts, and working in partnership with the affected communities, can achieve sustained reductions in firearm violence. Congress must support and prioritize programs working to address this urgent human rights and public health crisis.

These programs save lives and make our communities safer and stronger. That is why I support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act as an important step toward addressing this urgent public health and human rights crisis. The Break the Cycle of Violence Act would fund these critical, evidence-driven programs led by community members that are proven to be effective at preventing gun violence.

Persistent gun violence in the United States is denying people their civil and political rights including their right to live, the right to security of person, and the right to be free from discrimination. Gun violence also undermines the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to health and the right to education.

In addition to the unimaginable human toll of gun violence across the country, the economic cost is stunning. Estimates place the annual cost of gun violence at hundreds of billions of dollars every year, including medical and criminal justice expenses. Accordingly, it is not only in the interest of our fundamental human rights, but also your constituents as taxpayers, to robustly fund these programs.

You can make a difference on the crisis of gun violence. As your constituent, I am asking for you to support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act and support Congress allocating at least \$5 billion over the next 8 years to community gun violence prevention and intervention programs.

Kind regards,



Welcoming Refugees

We are facing a global refugee crisis, with an estimated 100 million people forcibly displaced worldwide. Among them, nearly 1.5 million need urgent access to resettlement this year.

Every September, the President sets the refugee admissions goal for the coming fiscal year. Last year, President Biden showed leadership in increasing the goal to 125,000. But as we approach the end of the fiscal year, only a fraction of that number have been resettled. We can and must do more.

Now is the time for state and local elected officials to lead and urge the President to rebuild the refugee resettlement program so that we can truly meet our commitments of being a country of refuge. Reach out to your mayor, city council members, state legislators, and governors to ensure that the voices of state and local communities are heard!

Online action to your local officials at <https://welcomingrefugees2023.org/reaching-out-to-elected-representatives/>

The need for resettlement has never been greater. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) [has reported](#) that a record-breaking 100 million people are now forcibly displaced worldwide, 26.6 million of whom are registered as refugees. More than half of those registered are children.

Since establishing the US refugee program in 1980, the United States has historically resettled the largest number of refugees annually, until recent years. Now more than ever, we need to renew and rebuild this commitment in the face of unprecedented circumstances. This is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing. We have seen how refugees have invigorated our economies, brought innovation, and strengthened our communities through their contributions to our public life and cultural institutions.

Resettlement saves lives and paves the way for a brighter future for all of us. But while the Biden administration promised to welcome 125,000 refugees last year, only a fraction of that number was actually admitted. We must do more.

In anticipation of the President's annual decision on how many refugees the United States will resettle in the upcoming fiscal year, this nonpartisan, unbranded letter emphasizes how vital refugees are to the fabric of our communities, and why we need a robust, well-funded system to welcome them.



“Anyone Can Die At Any Time” Indiscriminate Attacks By Russian Forces In Kharkiv, Ukraine

(A new Amnesty International report issued June 13 and is available in full at <https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Anyone-Can-Die-At-Any-Time-June13.pdf>)

Executive Summary Below

At the beginning of their invasion of Ukraine, Russian forces launched a relentless campaign of indiscriminate bombardments against Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-biggest city. They shelled residential neighbourhoods almost daily, killing hundreds of civilians and causing wholesale destruction. Many of the attacks were carried out using widely banned cluster munitions.

Attacks on Kharkiv began on 24 February, the first day of the full-scale conflict. Russian forces tried to seize the city using a ground invasion force supported by massive artillery fire and missile strikes. Several residential neighbourhoods, including Oleksiivka, Saltivka, Piatykhatky, and Novi Domy, came under fire that evening. This initial push to take over the city failed, but parts of the city remained under heavy bombardment for two months. Since late April, Russian forces have been pushed back a greater distance from the city, but the shelling continues, albeit less intensely. Ivan Litvynenko, age 40, told Amnesty International about one such attack, which mortally wounded his wife Oksana on 15 April. Several cluster munitions exploded in a playground where he was walking with his wife and their four-year-old daughter, nearly killing his wife. He recalled: “When my daughter saw her mum on the ground in a pool of blood, she said to me, ‘let’s go home; mum is dead and the people are dead.’ She was in shock and so was I.” He said that his wife’s prognosis remains dire; it is still not clear whether she will be able to speak or walk again. “Our world has been turned upside down,” he concluded.

The number of people in Kharkiv whose lives have been lost or irreparably harmed is substantial. The director of the medical department of the Kharkiv Regional Military Administration told Amnesty International that 606 civilians had been killed and 1,248 injured in the Kharkiv region between 24 February and 28 April, about 70 percent of them in Kharkiv city and the rest in the surrounding area. Oleh Syniehubov, the governor of Kharkiv Oblast, announced on 15 March that 600 residential buildings had been destroyed in Russian attacks since the beginning of the conflict.

Amnesty International researchers spent 14 days in April and May investigating 41 strikes in Kharkiv, which killed at least 62 civilians and injured over 196. They visited strike locations and interviewed 160 people, including victims, survivors, relatives of victims, witnesses and doctors who treated the injured. The organisation’s researchers also collected and analysed material evidence from strike locations, notably munitions fragments which were analysed by weapons experts, as well as an array of digital investigative material. Many of those interviewed asked that their surname not be made public.



Amnesty International researchers documented seven cluster munition strikes in different neighbourhoods all over the city, where they found fins and pellets/fragments of cluster submunitions, as well as fragments of Uragan rockets known to carry such munitions. Indiscriminate attacks were also carried out using scatterable land mines and other explosive weapons, notably Grad rockets. In all, the organization documented 28 indiscriminate strikes on Kharkiv launched by Russian forces between 28 February and 30 April.

These continuing attacks have forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of residents. A city with a pre-war population of 1.4 million people, Kharkiv emptied quickly under Russia's brutal campaign of bombardment. On 8 March, Governor Syniehubov said that more than 600,000 civilians had been evacuated from the Kharkiv region.⁷ In 28 March, the mayor of Kharkiv estimated that about 30 percent of the city's population had left, with the exodus continuing in April.⁸ Many of the families who stayed were forced to take refuge underground, hiding in school basements, subway stations, and other ad hoc shelters.

The repeated bombardments of residential neighbourhoods in Kharkiv are indiscriminate attacks which killed and injured hundreds of civilians, and as such constitute war crimes. This is true both for the strikes carried out using cluster as well as those conducted using other types of unguided rockets and unguided artillery shells, which are indiscriminate when used in the vicinity of concentrations of civilians. The continued use of such inaccurate explosive weapons in populated civilian areas, in the knowledge that they are repeatedly causing large numbers of civilian casualties, may even amount to directing attacks against the civilian population.

Amnesty International calls for justice processes to be as comprehensive as possible, ensuring that all perpetrators are brought to justice through independent, impartial, and fair trials for all crimes under international law.

