



Amnesty International

Group 524

January 2023



**No January Meeting
2022 Write For Rights Recap
Guantanamo Anniversary**

Welcome

I hope all had an enjoyable and peace-filled holiday season. We hope to have an in person meeting sometime early this year. Advance notice will be sent out before the newsletter is issued. This month's focus is on efforts to close the Guantanamo detention facility.

2022 Write For Rights Recap

Thanks to all who participated in this year's Write For Rights effort. The event, hosted by Group 39, produced more than 300 letters! Group 524 also made a contribution to help offset postage. After reporting our efforts, Amnesty sent us a certificate of thanks and is reprinted on page 2. There is also some good news concerning one of those cases we wrote about, also on page 2.

Guantanamo Anniversary

January 2023 marks the shameful 21st anniversary of the detention facility at Guantanamo. An appeal written by a former prisoner, is reprinted on page 4 and a model letter to President Biden is on page 5.

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/>.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd.



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).



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

HUMAN RIGHTS HERO CERTIFICATE

IS AWARDED TO

Amnesty International Group 524

WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2022



Andrew Fandino

Andrew Fantino, Senior Program Officer Individuals at Risk, AIUSA

GOOD NEWS Update on Write for Rights Case Chow Hang-Tung

On December 14, 2022 Chow Hang-tung [won the appeal against her conviction](#) on the charge of ‘inciting others to take part in an unauthorized assembly’. She had received a 15-month prison sentence in January 2022.

As Chow is still facing further imprisonment for allegedly endangering national security through her entirely peaceful actions, it is **IMPORTANT** to continue to work on her case.





Amnesty International USA Condemns Biden Administration's Attack On Asylum

January 5, 2023

Amnesty International USA Advocacy Director for the Americas, Amy Fischer, released the following statement in response to the Biden administration's announcement to limit pathways to asylum seekers:

"Amnesty International USA condemns the Biden Administration's attack on the human right to seek asylum. Today, the Biden Administration fully reversed course on its stated commitment to human rights and racial justice by once again expanding the use of Title 42, announcing rule-making on an asylum transit ban, expanding the use of expedited removal, and implementing a new system to require appointments through a mobile app for those desperately seeking safety. While we welcome the expanded humanitarian parole program to provide a pathway for Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans to apply for protection without having to make the dangerous journey to the border, that must not come at the expense of the human right to seek asylum.

These new policies will undoubtedly have a disparate impact on Black, Brown, and Indigenous people seeking safety. In fact, Amnesty International previously found that the cruel treatment of Haitians under Title 42 subjected Haitian asylum seekers to arbitrary detention and discriminatory and humiliating ill-treatment that amounts to race-based torture. The measure of success for border policies should be reflected in protection given, not denied. The new policy for Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans is an extension of the program established for Venezuelans which has resulted in massive deterrence for Venezuelans seeking protection, deportations from Mexico, and Venezuelans facing violent pushbacks at the U.S. border.

The United States has both a legal and moral obligation to uphold the right to seek asylum, and over the holidays, we once again saw communities mobilize to welcome asylum seekers with dignity. The Biden Administration must reverse course and stop these policies of exclusion, and instead uphold the right to seek asylum and invest in the communities that are stepping up to welcome."



I'm a survivor of cruel and inhumane treatment.

I was held behind bars at the Guantánamo Bay detention center for fourteen years, tortured, and never even charged with a crime.

I was finally released in 2016, thanks to the activism of Amnesty International members and others who campaigned tirelessly for my freedom.

But I'm just one person, and I was lucky to be freed: today, Guantánamo remains open, imprisoning 35 Muslim men indefinitely. Most have also never been charged with a crime nor given a fair trial.



President Biden must end these grave human rights violations by transferring out the men who have been cleared for release, and closing Guantánamo once and for all. During my first few years detained, I was subjected to torture and mistreatment that most people couldn't even imagine: extreme isolation, sleep deprivation, frigid rooms, beatings, humiliation, and threats made against me and my family. I was even blindfolded and taken out to sea in a boat for a mock execution.

A military prosecutor acknowledged that there was no reliable evidence to charge me with any crimes... and a federal judge ordered my release. But the U.S. government appealed and continued to hold me without charge or trial for years.

While I was languishing behind bars, my mother passed away, not knowing whether I would ever be set free. Now that I am free, I still face the stigma of being a former detainee. But Amnesty helped me get a passport and I was finally able to travel to pursue my writing career in Europe, to get medical treatment, and to meet with people worldwide who are working to close Guantánamo.

I am so thankful for my freedom — but my story is not unlike others who remain imprisoned at Guantánamo to this day.

President Biden has made important changes on human rights already, but he hasn't done enough when it comes to Guantánamo. He needs to take swift and decisive action to show us that he is committed to closing the prison during his term.

That's where we come in — where we speak up and join Amnesty International's all-important campaign.

During my time behind bars, I knew that there were many people fighting for my freedom. I am so grateful for all the people who spoke out for me when I didn't have a voice.

When we speak up for human rights, we can make a huge difference. We can secure human rights for all.

Thank you,



Mohamedou Ould Salahi

Group 524
January 2023



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

Dear President Biden,

After nearly 21 years of injustice, I ask you to please shut down the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay. The U.S. government's use of indefinite detention without charge as a response to the attacks of September 11, 2001 has been unlawful from the outset. This detention regime must be brought to an end.

The impunity that persists in relation to the enforced disappearance, torture and other ill treatment, and other human rights violations committed against these detainees is unacceptable, and a stain on the U.S. human rights record. Torture and enforced disappearance are crimes under international law.

As an Amnesty International supporter and supporter of human rights, I urge you to work toward a lawful solution for the detainees still held at the Guantánamo Bay facility by: either transferring them for release, or bringing individuals to justice in federal courts, if this can be achieved in accordance with international law and standards and without recourse to the death penalty.

All detainees already cleared for transfer should be transferred immediately to countries where their human rights will be respected. The remaining men who have not been charged with a crime should likewise be transferred as soon as possible. Those who were subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment must receive genuine access to rehabilitation and redress. Finally, those responsible for torture and enforced disappearance must be brought to justice in a fair trial.

This appeal is long overdue. You made a promise to end this ongoing injustice and close the Guantánamo Bay facility. But after nearly two years in office, you haven't lived up to that commitment. Please, do the right thing – I urge you to close Guantánamo Bay once and for all.

Thank you.



Amnesty International continues to demand President Putin end his war on Ukraine. February 24th, 2023 marks the 1 year anniversary of the current invasion *-yet some in Congress are calling for cuts of U.S. support of Ukraine.*

AIUSA will launch a **Spotlight on Ukraine** soon, urging all of us to contact our Members of Congress, telling them not to abandon the Ukrainian people.

