



Amnesty International

Group 524

March 2023



March IN PERSON Meeting Asylum and Family Detention Sri Lanka

Welcome

I hope everyone is well. We are planning to have our first IN PERSON meeting since **2020** on **March 21 at 7pm** in the new residence for the Sisters. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns. It will be great see those who can attend.

Asylum and Family Detention

The Biden Administration is reportedly planning to re-introduce family detention, which they previously ended, as early as May. This follows the shameful proposed rule by Biden that is expected to go into effect in the next few months which will effectively ban asylum for most people seeking safety at the southern border. Please see the details on page 2 and sample letter on page 3.

Sri Lanka Campaign

The Sri Lankan government has been cracking down on legitimate peaceful protest under the guise of counter-terrorism. The effort to repeal unjust laws is underway with details on page 4 and a sample letter to US officials on page 5.

ICC Warrant for Putin Issued

Page 6 contains the AI press release on the International Criminal Court's issuance of an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin over his alleged war crimes in Ukraine.

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).



Tell Biden Don't Ban Asylum, Don't Lock Up Families

The Biden Administration is reportedly planning to re-introduce family detention, which they previously ended, as early as May. This follows the shameful proposed rule by Biden that is expected to go into effect in the next few months which will effectively ban asylum for most people seeking safety at the southern border. We must come out boldly and proactively against these direct attacks on asylum seekers.



President Biden just made two announcements targeting vulnerable people, families, and children seeking safety in the U.S.:

Reports indicate he may be considering reviving the horrifying practice of **family detention**, an inhumane and unjust policy of jailing immigrant parents with their children — including babies. And his plans to revive a **Trump-era asylum ban** would block protections for everyone that did not seek asylum while fleeing through third countries — a policy that was once halted in the courts *because it was deemed illegal*.

It is shameful for this administration to turn its back on its campaign promise to end family detention, restore the asylum system, and rebuild an immigration system that would center human rights.

All people who come to the U.S. seeking safety must have their human rights respected.

Help us flood the White House with strong opposition to these latest moves.



Group 524
March 2023



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

Dear President Biden,

I am shocked and disappointed to learn of the multiple actions your administration intends to take to deny asylum-seekers - including families and babies - their human right to seek safety.

Your plans to revive the Trump-era asylum ban that would block protections for anyone that did not seek asylum while crossing through third countries is cruel and unconstitutional - it was even once halted in the courts due to its illegality.

And the latest news as reported by the New York Times that you are considering reinstating the practice of detaining migrant families is the same practice you shut down in 2021 because you promised a more humane immigration system.

President Biden, you came into office promising to rebuild an immigration system that would center human rights and racial justice. With these latest actions, you are going back on your promises.

Amid a global refugee crisis, your administration is embracing racist, xenophobic, and deadly policies that aim to make the exercise of seeking asylum so painful that individuals and families just give up.

I write alongside thousands of other Amnesty International supporters to urge you to reverse course and uphold human rights at the border, rather than advancing policies of hate and exclusion. You must halt all plans to reinstate family detention and the asylum ban, and instead invest in a robust welcoming system that allows asylum seekers to seek asylum at the border and pursue their asylum claims outside of detention while supported by community based organizations.

This was your commitment, and we are holding you accountable.

Sincerely,



Sri Lanka : THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA'S CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTERS MUST END

The President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, must repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a counterterrorism law, that has been weaponized to crackdown on peaceful protestors and stifle dissenting voices, in contravention of Sri Lanka's international human rights obligations, especially the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

PENALIZED FOR PROTESTING

In the last two years, the Sri Lankan government has intensified the crackdown on dissent, severely curtailing civil society freedom. People from all walks of life, especially minority communities, have been threatened, intimidated, harassed, and jailed, simply for expressing their views. Journalists, poets, teachers, and lawyers have been targeted for doing their jobs in ways that displease the authorities. Further, the state has targeted student activists and trade unionists in reprisal of their work. The government and government-affiliated groups have used smear campaigns, abduction-style arrest, raids of media outlets, travel bans, transfers and arbitrary arrests, and torture and other ill-treatment of protesters while in custody to limit and discourage freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

The continued references to protesters as 'terrorists' and 'fascists' by Members of Parliament and the President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, are attempts to demonize the protest movement. These attempts culminated in the government using the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act against three protesters, including a protest leader. A [study conducted by the Human Right Commission of Sri Lanka](#) found that PTA detainees faced a continuum of violence. The study documented that "violence in police custody was found to be an inherent element of the investigation process, whereby torture is inflicted to extract information, confessions, and evidence from detainees".

The PTA has enabled numerous instances of arbitrary detention and torture and other ill-treatment since 1979. Despite the Sri Lankan government's multiple assurances that the PTA would be reformed in line with international human rights standards, to date no adequate reforms have taken place and the PTA continues to be used as a tool to arbitrarily arrest and detain people, violate fair trial rights, and put detainees at risk of torture and other ill-treatment, amongst other violations.



Take action to protect human rights in Sri Lanka

As a constituent and supporter of Amnesty International, I write with deep concerns about the safety of the people of Sri Lanka who have been protesting for their rights to an adequate standard of living during a period of economic crisis.

The country is facing unprecedented economic hardship with little promise of quick resolution. As the longer-term impacts of economic instability take hold and without a resolution to defuse the crisis, it is imperative that the people of Sri Lanka are allowed to express dissent, demonstrate for their rights, and call for accountability. The government's long history of weaponizing the Prevention of Terroris Act (PTA) to crush dissent makes it impossible for the people of Sri Lanka to exercise their right to protest without fear of violent retribution. Repealing the PTA is a critical step in ensuring the government ends its efforts to silence and intimidate Sri Lankans.

The relentless repression of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, movement and expression speaks to the Sri Lankan government's legacy of suppressing dissent. Detaining protesters on terror charges is a clear violation of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly guaranteed by the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sri Lanka is a state party. The Sri Lankan authorities should immediately end their suppression of people's right to protest.

I call on my Senators and Representative in Congress to speak out about the Sri Lankan government's abuse of protestors and to work with the Biden Administration to take action to defend the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association in Sri Lanka by insisting that any counter-terror legislation adopted by the Sri Lankan government is compliant with international human rights standards.

Thank you,



RUSSIA: ICC'S ARREST WARRANT AGAINST PUTIN A STEP TOWARDS JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF WAR CRIMES IN UKRAINE

March 17, 2023

Responding to the International Criminal Court (ICC) issuing arrest warrants against Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, and Maria Lvova-Belova, Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation, Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International said:

“This announcement is an important signal – both for Ukraine and the rest of the world – that those who are allegedly responsible for crimes under international law in Ukraine will face arrest and trial, no matter how powerful they are.

“President Putin is now officially a wanted man. Following the ICC's indictment of President Putin and Children's Commissioner Lvova-Belova for the war crime of forcible transfer of children, the international community must stop at nothing until they are arrested and brought to trial.

“Should President Putin or Ms Lvova-Belova leave Russia, states must deny them safe haven by arresting them immediately and surrendering them to the ICC.

“The arrest warrants are an impressive first step, but they are so far limited to the war crime of unlawful deportation of children. This doesn't reflect the plethora of [war crimes and crimes against humanity](#) for which the Russian leadership is potentially responsible. We expect the ICC and other justice actors to issue further arrest warrants as their investigations into crimes under international law committed in Ukraine begin to show results.”

Background

In November 2022, Amnesty International [published a report](#) which documented forcible transfer and deportation of Ukrainian civilians, including children, by Russian forces and their proxies into Russian or deeper into Russian-occupied Ukraine. The organization found this amounted to war crimes and likely crimes against humanity.

According to a press release from the International Criminal Court, there are “reasonable grounds to believe” that “each suspect bears responsibility for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population” under Article 8 (war crimes) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

As there are currently 123 states parties to the Rome Statute, Putin and Lvova-Belova's arrest warrants are binding in 124 states (123 states parties plus Ukraine, which

granted the ICC jurisdiction over its territory for crimes committed there since 2014).

