



Amnesty International

Group 524

February 2024



Gaza/Israel
Democratic Republic of Congo
Group Census

Welcome

I hope everyone is having a good month and staying warm. Our focus this month is a Gaza ceasefire and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We hope to see you at the meeting February 20 at 6pm.

Gaza/Israel News

We continue to advocate for a cease-fire in the Gaza/Israel war. Recent Amnesty reports are detailed on pages 2-3 including additional concerns in the West Bank. A letter action is on page 4.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Forced evictions in this country are being driven by the mining of ores needed to transition to a cleaner energy economy. Details are on page 5 and an action on page 6.

Group Census

We will discuss our response to Amnesty's annual Group census.

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Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.
Meeting Location: The Commons Residence 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).



The ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel is beyond horrifying. As human rights activists, we must urgently call on all to protect civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories **and** Israel – and on our leaders to urgently and swiftly take action to prevent further civilian bloodshed and trauma. An action to President Biden is on page 4.

As of February 14th, and since October 7:

- [28,576 people have been killed](#), with 70% being women and children, and 68,291 have been injured in the occupied Gaza Strip by Israeli forces.
- Over [1.7 million, or 75%](#), of Palestinians have been internally displaced in the occupied Gaza Strip 21,672 people have been killed
- [388 Palestinians, including 99 children](#), have been killed, and 4,475 have been injured in the West Bank since October 7.
- [1,139 Israelis](#) were killed on October 7.
- [134 people](#) remain captive by Hamas.



Under the cover of the relentless bombardment and atrocity crimes in Gaza, Israeli forces have simultaneously unleashed a new, brutal wave of unlawful violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank — including unlawful killings, unnecessary lethal force against protesters, and the denial of medical assistance to injured people in the West Bank.¹



In our [new report](#), Amnesty researchers investigated four cases that resulted in the unlawful killing of 20 Palestinians, including seven children:

- In one case, two eyewitnesses told Amnesty that Israeli forces opened fire without warning on a crowd of at least 80 unarmed Palestinians peacefully demonstrating in solidarity with Gaza. A few minutes later, Israeli forces also opened fire in the direction of two journalists even though both were wearing vests clearly marked as Press.
- On multiple occasions, Israeli forces hindered or prevented those seriously injured in demonstrations and raids from receiving critical medical assistance. In a recent incident, soldiers carried out a raid masquerading as medical staff. They also shot at people trying to help, including medics tending to the wounded.
- Over the past four months, deadly raids have increased in the West Bank, with an unrelenting use of unlawful force that has spread fear in communities. Among those killed during the raid was 15-year-old Taha Mahamid, whom Israeli forces shot dead in front of his house as he came out to check whether Israeli forces had left the area. Evidence verified by Amnesty showed that Taha was unarmed and posed no threat. An eyewitness shared that Israeli forces then shot Taha's father in the back when he tried to carry his son to safety.
- Massacring, targeting, and deliberately killing civilians are war crimes. The research in [this investigative report](#) further cements the fact that Israeli forces are committing widespread human rights violations and doing so with impunity.

The international community has a responsibility to take action to prevent war crimes — and Amnesty is doing everything we can to demand action that will save lives and end the suffering.

Group 524
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President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

I write to you on behalf of Amnesty International USA with deep concern over the Israeli military offensive in Gaza and the escalation of violence in the West Bank and Israel. The U.S. government is uniquely positioned to have tremendous impact in this conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and the prevention of further suffering.

Since October 7, we have witnessed horror unfolding on an unimaginable scale in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. More than 2 million people in the Gaza Strip are struggling to survive amidst a catastrophic humanitarian crisis and the level of civilian casualties has been unprecedented. Serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, by all parties to the conflict continue unabated.

As a human rights activist, I urge you to use your power to demand that Israeli security forces and Palestinian armed groups make every effort to protect the lives of civilians and that the U.S. government does everything in its power to ensure the urgent and immediate provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza.

President Biden, we need urgent action to impose a ceasefire in this conflict and protect human rights. But we know that if broader systemic issues are not addressed, these patterns of violence and continued violations of rights will continue. With that, we ask that you play your part to help bring an end to the Israeli government's unlawful sixteen year blockade on Gaza and dismantle all other aspects of its system of apartheid imposed on all Palestinians.

We need a solution to this crisis that centers human rights, NOT further staggering levels of human suffering

Only strong U.S. leadership can meaningfully change the course of action and bring an end to violence and suffering once and for all.

Thank you.



End forced evictions in Kolwezi – DRC

People of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) pay a high price to supply the world with copper and cobalt: forced evictions, illegal destruction of their homes, and physical violence. Send a message to President Tshisekedi to end forced evictions and other human rights abuses at copper and cobalt mines.



What's the problem?

The climate crisis means that the world must quickly move away from fossil fuels and find new sources of energy. We need batteries to drive this transition. But this global shift must not sacrifice people or nature.

The DRC supplies most of the copper and cobalt used in lithium-ion batteries. These batteries power our smartphones, laptops, electric cars and bicycles, and play a major role in the energy transition away from fossil fuels. This transition is urgent and necessary.

However, mineral-rich regions of the DRC are sacrificed to mining development, leading to a shocking series of abuses in the region. Thousands of people have lost their homes, schools, hospitals, and communities due to the expansion of copper and cobalt mines in the DRC, especially in Kolwezi, which sits above rich copper and cobalt deposits.

These abuses take place in a country still recovering from colonial brutality, during which millions died and countless raw materials were mined and sold on international markets with little benefit to local people. In the global race to secure minerals for the energy transition, corporations and governments are once again putting profit above human rights.

President Tshisekedi describes the DRC as a “climate solution country”. Now he has the chance to become a global leader in climate justice and prove that in the DRC protecting human rights is an integral part of a just energy transition.

An online action to President Tshisekedi is available here: [End Forced Evictions](#)



Secretary Blinken
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

When Felix Tshisekedi was initially elected President of the Democratic Republic of Congo his administration promised that things would be different, and the rich mineral resources of the DRC would benefit its people first. However, research by Amnesty International and the Initiative for Good Governance and Human Rights tells a grimmer story. Frontline communities living in and around Kolwezi are forcibly evicted from their homes and farmlands to pave the way for industrial cobalt and copper mining, often without proper consultation or just and fair compensation.

These findings also show that resettlement options are scarce, and alternative housing lacks basic amenities and social infrastructure such as schools, health centers or recreational sites.

The Biden Administration has regularly touted both its rights-centered foreign policy as well as a commitment to a just energy transition. It is vital the U.S. lives up to its own stated principles. Given the close working relationship between the U.S. and the DRC, I urge you to:

- Ask President Tshisekedi to put a moratorium on further mass evictions in the mining sector; and
- Support the new Congolese government in implementing procedures and laws to protect the rights of frontline mining communities. This includes sharing best practices from other resource rich countries and financial support to conduct meaningful consultations with impacted communities; and
- Work with U.S. based companies and investors to ensure they are following Congolese law.

I urge you to use the momentum of Tshisekedi's recent re-election to encourage change in Congolese mining practices. As the U.S. benefits from Congolese resources, it is vital to support a just energy transition and ensure Congolese communities are not left behind.

Sincerely,