



Amnesty International

Group 524

November 2024



Good News - Prisoner Releases December Write For Rights Event Urgent Human Rights Actions

Welcome

The focus this month is human rights actions we urge President Biden to take before leaving office. We hope to see you at the meeting November 19 at 6pm.

December Write For Rights Event

Group 39 is sponsoring the annual Write For Rights event on December 9. See page 2. This event will take the place of our regular December monthly meeting.

Prisoner Releases

We have good news to share about a number of cases including one from last years Write For Rights event. See pages 3 and 4.

Human Rights

At this month's meeting we will discuss the state of affairs concerning human rights in light of the election results. Pages 5 and 6 have details on 6 actions Amnesty is urging President Biden to take. I've included links to each as an online action but I will have letters to sign at the meeting.

Amnesty International Group 524

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).



Speak up so that their voice is not silenced



Join Amnesty International Group 39 and other human rights groups and community leaders for our 39th Write for Human Rights event.

Monday, December 9, 2024, 6:00-9:00pm

**Calvary Episcopal Church,
315 Shady Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206**

Write a letter. Change a life. Come for five minutes or the whole event.
Case information, letter writing materials and light refreshments will be provided.

Please visit amnestypgh.org to learn more about this event, other Group 39 activities, or to make a donation

Contact: amnesty39@gmail.com

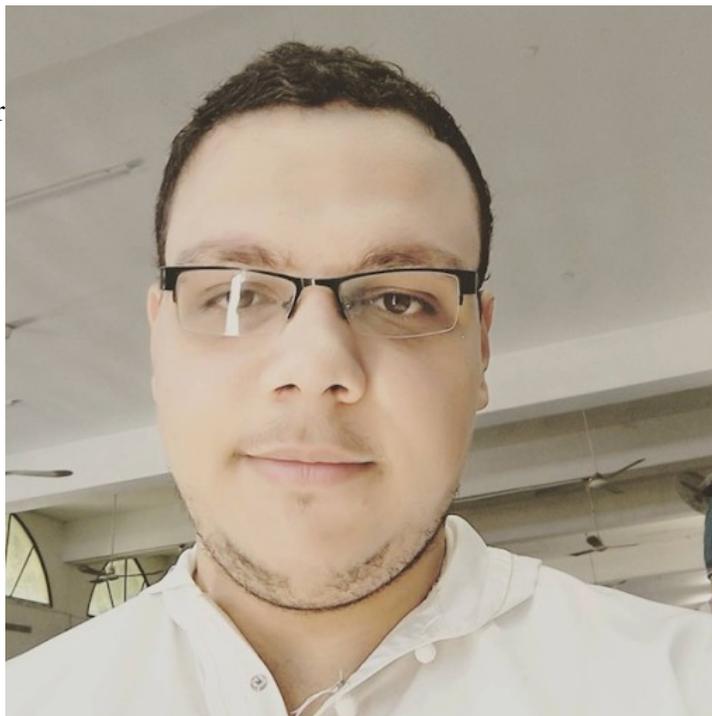


GOOD NEWS!

On September 30, 2024, Palestinian surgeon, Khaled Al Serr, was released from Israeli detention after spending more than six months without charges or trial, half of which was incommunicado detention, under the abusive Unlawful Combatants Law. Dr. Khaled Al Serr was arbitrarily detained by the Israeli military on March 25, 2024, along with other medical staff, from Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis in the occupied Gaza Strip.

Amnesty has been campaigning and advocating for Dr. Al Serr ever since he was taken by Israeli forces while working at a hospital in Gaza, along with other healthcare workers. For over five months, his family did not know if he was safe or even alive. **We are so grateful for the thousands of you who helped amplify calls for his release.**

On the heels of this great news, please [join us in continuing to campaign for those Palestinians who are still detained, including journalists Nidal and Haitham.](#)



Education activist Ahmad Fahim Azimi was just released after 11 months in prison. He should never have been jailed for promoting girls' rights to access education. His arrest, arbitrary detention, and unfair trial were against international human rights law.

Since its return to power in Afghanistan, the Taliban has detained, tortured, and in some cases killed activists, journalists, poets, and others across the country.

Thank you to all who worked tirelessly calling for his release.



Good news on Maung Sawyeddollah from our W4R 2023 campaign

Maung Sawyeddollah, a 23-year-old Rohingya activist whom Amnesty Tech has been working closely with since 2022, has arrived safely in New York City and is now an international student at New York University. Sawyeddollah was featured in the Social Atrocity Report, focusing on Meta's role in the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya in 2017, and then featured as one of the HRDs in our **2023 Write for Rights Campaign**.

In September 2023 we learned that Sawyeddollah was facing serious security risks in the refugee camps in Bangladesh while working with him on the W4R campaign. Together with our partners [Victim Advocates International](#) and [Dev.tv](#), we put our resources together to find a way for Sawyeddollah to stay safe. Through Amnesty's Global Relief Team Sawyeddollah was provided with urgent financial assistance to support his security needs throughout the year. Sawyeddollah has never stopped campaigning for the Rohingya's right to education and for an effective remedy from Meta. He became a finalist of the Kofi Annan Next Gen Democracy Prize and has participated remotely in many W4R 2023 initiatives with our national entities.



He has also focused on continuing his higher education. Restrictions by the Bangladeshi authorities mean Rohingya refugees are generally unable to access higher education, which meant that Sawyeddollah was unable to enroll in university in Bangladesh. After sending 147 applications to university programs around the world, he secured a place at NYU to study Social Science with a focus on International Studies. Amnesty helped him apply for his student visa and relocate to the US.



Amnesty International Urges President Biden To Take These Six Actions Before Leaving Office

1. ABOLISH THE FEDERAL DEATH PENALTY

TAKE ACTION

Commute the sentences of people on federal and military death row.

The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Forty-four men remain on federal death row.

Nearly half a century after the USA resumed judicial killing, it is falling far short of this responsibility. President Biden proclaimed that the “United States is leading the power of our example – demonstrating that our commitment to human rights begins here at home.” Close to three-quarters of the countries in the world have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice. In 2023, after China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Somalia, **the U.S. was the fifth country in the world when it comes to the number of known executions.** The U.S. should move toward abolishing this cruel practice. Time is running out on this administration. Now is the time for President Biden to use his constitutional authority to commute the death sentences of all of those on federal and military death row.

2. ACT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

TAKE ACTION

Establish a commission to examine reparations for slavery

The institution of chattel slavery has deep roots within the United States and continues to cast an ugly shadow over progress and equality. Years of systemic racism, discriminatory legislation, and violence have created stark contrasts in quality of living, health care, income, and access to education. President Biden can use his executive authority to **create a commission to investigate the legacy of chattel slavery** and its ongoing harms and develop reparations proposals for Black Americans in the U.S. Time is running out on this administration to deliver towards racial justice.

3. CHANGE COURSE ON BORDER POLICY AND ASYLUM

TAKE ACTION

Racist rhetoric about invasions at the border and fear mongering about how people seeking safety are security threats fuel policies that deny people their human right to seek safety. The current border policies are cruel and undermine the human right to seek asylum. Biden must restore access to asylum at the border and ensure that the bipartisan border bill remains a thing of the past. People seeking safety must no longer be treated as pawns in Washington’s political game, and **President Biden must restore access to asylum** in his final weeks in office.

Current border immigration rules are clearly intended to deter people seeking safety from exercising their human right to seek asylum, as well as to punish and inflict cruelty on those who continue to seek safety as they are legally allowed to do so. Clinging to policies of cruelty is wrong, especially when there are solutions on the table that can both solve the issues at the border and provide meaningful support for cities like Springfield, New York, Chicago, and Denver without human suffering and with respect for human rights and dignity. President Biden must remember his promise to restore sanity to our immigration system. **He must not pass the Border Bill as one of his last acts as President.**



4. STOP ARMS TRANSFER TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

TAKE ACTION

Amnesty International has joined countless human rights and humanitarian organizations and experts from around the world to provide extensive evidence that Israeli forces are using U.S.-origin weapons in violation of not only international law but also U.S. law and policy. Even in its evaluations, the administration determined that it is “reasonable to assess” that Israeli security forces’ use of U.S. weapons has been “in instances inconsistent” with international humanitarian law.

President Biden has himself expressed concern about the actions of Israeli forces on a number of occasions and paused one weapons shipment of 2,000 pound bombs due to these concerns. He must know that continued weapons transfers will lead to an even bigger unmitigated—and unlawful— disaster, human suffering and death that he and the U.S. government is enabling with U.S. taxpayer dollars.

The U.S. government must stop the transfer and sale of weapons in a context where there is a grave risk they further unlawful killings and other violations of international law, including failing to prevent genocide. In his final weeks as president, he must immediately suspend the transfer and sale of weapons to the government of Israel. He must also use all leverage to bring about an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the occupied Gaza Strip, establish unhindered humanitarian aid and access, and enable the safe return of the remaining hostages.

5. RECTIFY A CASE OF INJUSTICE

TAKE ACTION

Free Indigenous elder and activist Leonard Peltier

Indigenous elder and activist Leonard Peltier has been incarcerated for nearly 50 years despite serious and ongoing concerns about the fairness of his trial. He is now 80 years old and is dealing with numerous health issues. No one should be imprisoned after a trial riddled with uncertainty about its fairness, and keeping him locked behind bars does not serve justice.

As a matter of humanity, mercy, and human rights, in his remaining weeks in office, President Biden should grant clemency and release Leonard Peltier. This would not only allow Peltier to be home with his family and community for his last years, but it would also help **mend the fractured relationship between Native Americans and the U.S. government**, which could be forever part of Biden’s legacy.

6. MAKE HISTORY

TAKE ACTION

Close the Guantánamo Bay detention facility and transfer the remaining detainees to countries where their human rights will be respected.

The military detention facility at Guantánamo Bay is a glaring, longstanding stain on the human rights record of the United States. Today, it is **violating the rights of the 30 Muslim men it continues to detain indefinitely**, most without charge and none having been given a fair trial. President Biden has a critical window of opportunity to end the ongoing abuses at Guantanamo by closing the detention center before the end of his term. Now is the time to transfer all detainees cleared for release or not charged with crimes to countries where their human rights will be respected, halting the unfair military commissions and fairly resolving the pending cases, and close the Guantánamo prison once and for all.