



AI Group 48 May 2025 Newsletter

Next Meeting May 8th On Zoom

U.S. Senate Resolution on El Salvador a Critical Step in Confronting Human Rights Crisis

In response to the U.S. Senate introducing a Section 502B resolution to request information on El Salvador's human rights practices, Americas Advocacy Director for Amnesty International USA Daniel Noroña said:

"With the introduction of this resolution, Senators Kaine, Van Hollen, Schumer and Padilla are rightfully demanding more information into the ongoing human rights crisis in El Salvador. Congress has a responsibility to ensure that U.S. assistance does not support governments engaged in human rights abuses, and this resolution is one tool legislators have to uphold human rights standards in U.S. foreign policy.

"Since El Salvador's state of emergency began in March 2022, Amnesty International has documented widespread human rights violations—including gross violations of human rights such as arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, torture and other cruel treatment, and deaths in custody. The state of emergency has been extended repeatedly, weakening oversight and eroding human rights protections.

"This resolution is especially urgent in light of recent unlawful expulsions by the Trump administration of individuals from the U.S. to El Salvador, where they face a real risk of torture and other ill-treatment, especially at the CECOT mega-prison known for its abusive conditions. We've repeatedly warned that removals to countries whose governments commit widespread abuses place people in serious danger. These expulsions amount to enforced disappearances."



Dan Handelman, wearing red face covering, leading a protest march in March 2022, co-sponsored by Group 48. Handelman, who passed last month at the age of 60, will be remembered for his decades of steadfast activism.

Urgent Action: Thailand Five Uyghurs Still at Risk of Forced Return

After Thai authorities forcibly returned 40 Uyghur refugees to China on February 27th, five other Uyghur refugees are at risk of being forcibly returned to China where they would be at real risk of serious human rights violations. The men had travelled to Thailand in 2014 fleeing persecution, and the Thai government must uphold its obligations and ensure their rights, including to international protection.

The five men travelled to Thailand in March 2014, after fleeing persecution, discrimination, and other grave human rights violations in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Two of the men were children, aged 16 at the time. They were among more than 300 men, women, children, and elderly people who officials detained in two operations targeting presumed human smuggling camps in mid-March 2014. Officials transferred individuals to immigration detention centres under Thailand's Immigration Act, which allows for the indefinite detention of people who are in Thailand without official authorisation.

In June 2015, authorities had allowed 172 women and children from the group to travel to Turkey. In July 2015, Thailand breached its domestic and international human rights obligations, including the principle of non-refoulement, by facilitating the forcible return of 109 other Uyghur men, women and children to China, after their transfer by Thai officials to the custody of Chinese officials in July of that year. The individuals were forced onto a chartered flight to China by armed Chinese security personnel on July 9th, 2015. At the time, Amnesty decried the deportations as "a despicable act, and illegal under international law". In 2020 the five men escaped from Mukdahan Immigration Office in North-eastern Thailand. They described oppressive conditions of detention, including crowding and damp as a reason for their escape. Authorities have sentenced them to terms of imprisonment until 2029 for escaping from detention. In light of the deportation of 40 Uyghurs in late February (see more below), there are concerns that authorities may grant them a pardon for the purposes of accelerating their deportation

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back to China.

Prior to their imprisonment, they, along with dozens of other Uyghurs detained with them, were unlawfully held for years without charge or trial under the Immigration Act, which does not define a maximum period for detention. They were held without an opportunity to have their protection needs assessed and without a judicial review mechanism or channel to review the necessity or proportionality of their detention. Their indefinite detention while in Immigration Detention Centres amounts to arbitrary detention, prohibited under international law. In addition, Amnesty has confirmed poor conditions of detention in the centres, including inconsistent and insufficient access to healthcare, which could amount to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment. Five detained Uyghurs, including a three-year-old child and a newborn baby, have died while in custody.

In January 2025, Thai government officials had visited Uyghur refugees in Suan Phlu Immigration Centre and had reportedly pressured them to complete paperwork agreeing to deportation to China. Authorities subsequently denied the men access to officials from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency), who they had requested to meet to have their request for asylum processed. UN human rights experts, governments and members of civil society called on the Thai government to uphold its obligations not to engage in refoulement. Refoulement is also prohibited under Section 13 of Thailand's 2022 Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappear-

ance Act, which states 'No government organizations or public officials shall expel, deport, or extradite a person to another country where there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be in danger of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, or enforced disappearance.' Regrettably, in the early hours of February 27th, 2025, Thai authorities transported a group of 40 Uyghur men from

Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Centre to Don Mueang Airport, where they apparently boarded a flight direct to Urumqi, China.

Amnesty International has raised concerns that new regulations in force

in Thailand since September 22nd, 2023, which establish a National Screening Mechanism (NSM) to grant protected status to asylum seekers seeking protection from persecution, are discriminatory. As well as exempting migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam, they further allow authorities to deny protection on "national security" grounds without being required to explain why the decision was made, which could further result in the exclusion of specific groups of refugees and asylum seekers, including Uyghur, Rohingya and North Koreans.

Amnesty International has documented massive and systematic abuses by the government of China against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslims living in Xinjiang Autonomous Region, including in internment camps, where over a million people have been arbitrarily detained. Uyghurs have been subjected to severe restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and religion, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, unfair trials, executions,



Group Coordinators

Marty Fromer and Terrie Rodello

Treasurer -- Tena Hoke

Newsletter -- Daniel Webb

OR Area Coordinator -- Marty Fromer

Indonesia actions -- Max White

China / Uyghur actions -- Marty Fromer

Iran POC -- Tena Hoke

Concert Tabling -- Will Ware

Central Africa/ Oregon State Death

Penalty Abolition-- Terrie Rodello

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extrajudicial killings, and violations of economic, cultural, and social rights. Amnesty International has concluded that the Chinese government has committed at least the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture and persecution against Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups.

Sample Letter

Dear Prime Minister,

It is unconscionable that your government forcibly returned 40 ethnic Uyghur refugees to China on February 27th, in violation of Thailand's international human rights obligations and of the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the transfer of persons to any country or jurisdiction where they would face a real risk of serious human rights violations. I am concerned for the situation of an additional five Uyghur men imprisoned in Klong Prem Central Prison, Bangkok, who are themselves at risk of forcible return to China.

I am disturbed to learn that prior to deporting them, your government denied the 40 refugees their requests to have access to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and have their protection needs assessed. The deported refugees had been held in prolonged arbitrary detention in conditions which amounted to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment in immigration detention facilities designed for short-term stays, without access to adequate medical care, family, and lawyers.

I am saddened that the Thai government failed to protect these men, despite the recent enactment of domestic law prohibiting refoulement and the adoption of a newly created mechanism to screen individuals in need of international protection. I therefore

TAKE ACTION:

Write an appeal in your own words or use the supplied model letter.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra

Government House

1 Phitsanalok Road

Bangkok

Thailand

Fax: (+66) 2618 2358

Email: prforeign@prd.go.th

Please take action as soon as possible until September 13th, 2025. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

urge you to show your commitment to upholding your international human rights obligations and take the following actions:

- Ensure the five Uyghur men have access to a full, effective and fair procedure to assess their asylum claims; to adequate and appropriate medical care and lawyer of their choice; and commit to not forcibly returning them to China or to a third country from where they could be returned to China;*
- Investigate the refoulement of 40 Uyghur men forcibly returned to China and ensure those found responsible are held to account in fair trials;*
- End arbitrary detention of refugees and migrants and amend legislation and regulations in line with international standards accordingly.*

Yours sincerely,

Urgent Action: Stop Revoking Visas of Foreign Students

On March 8, US immigration authorities unlawfully arrested and arbitrarily detained Mahmoud Khalil for his role in student protests at Columbia University. Authorities revoked his permanent residency status under a rarely used law and placed him into deportation proceedings. At least nine other students are known to have been similarly targeted for their protest or expressive activity. Hundreds

more have had their visas revoked with different and minimal justifications. We demand US authorities stop the retaliatory or unjustified revocation of students' visas and residency status and respect their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, due process, and freedom from discrimination.

On March 8, 2025, the US government detained Mahmoud Khalil, a former Columbia University

graduate student who served as a spokesperson/negotiator for campus protesters and is a permanent resident. Soon after, the apprehension and detention of nine additional foreign students who participated in protests or spoke out against the war in the occupied Gaza Strip and the revocation of their visas or residency status became public. Two of the students on visas decided to leave the country rather than face the inhumane conditions within the US immigration detention system and potential deportation. A video of the apprehension of a PhD student showed her being intercepted on the street near her home in late March by six plainclothes and mostly masked immigration officers and placed in an unmarked car. The agents reportedly refused to identify themselves until after she was detained. She co-wrote an opinion piece in her school newspaper criticizing her school's lack of response to the university students' demands regarding the genocide in Gaza. A US Department of Homeland Security spokesperson later claimed the student "engaged in activities in support Hamas" without providing any evidence. Another permanent resident who was an organizer of pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University was detained by immigration officials as he attended an interview as part of his application for US citizenship.

On March 27, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced he had revoked the visas of at least 300 students and visitors since January, claiming that the individuals engaged in "vandalizing universities, harassing students, taking over buildings, creating a ruckus" without providing any evidence. More recent reporting indicates that at least 1300 students had their visas revoked. Many of the impacted students claim they never engaged in protests and were never provided notice of the revocation, though some may have had some interaction with law enforcement during their stays, for even minor reasons such as a traffic ticket. According to a lawsuit filed on behalf of two students in California, students were targeted

because they were from African, Arab, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim backgrounds. In furtherance of an Executive Order issued by President Trump to combat antisemitism, the US government is asserting that it has broad power under a rarely used component of immigration law to revoke the visas and residency statuses on foreign policy grounds and remove foreign students who participated in protests against the ongoing conflict in the occupied Gaza Strip. The statute, 8 USC 1251(a)(4)(C)(i), allows the Secretary of State to deport any noncitizen whom he has reasonable grounds to believe the noncitizen's

"presence or activities... would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States."

The US government has broad discretion to deny visas to applicants while they are abroad. Once individuals are within the USA, they are protected by the US Constitution, which includes the rights to free speech and due process.

All people, regardless of

immigration status, have the human rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, due process, and to be free from discrimination. Students who refuse to abandon their studies and leave the country or who are detained by immigration officials risk being held in the US immigration detention system, which Amnesty International has previously documented fails to meet international standards.

Sample Letter

Dear Secretary Kristi Noem,

I am writing regarding the recent trend of targeting foreign students with repression, detention, and potential deportation for either their activities in protests, speaking out in support of Palestinian rights and against the ongoing war crimes and genocide in the occupied Gaza Strip, or due to their backgrounds.

Following the detention of Mahmoud Khalil on March 8 and the revocation of his residency status, the US government revoked the student visas of seven identified individuals and is seeking to revoke the



residency status of at least two other students who protested or spoke up about the conflict in the occupied Gaza Strip under an obscure and rarely used provision of immigration law. At least 1300 additional students are known to have had their visas revoked. However, many of these students never received notice of the revocation, nor did they participate in any protest or expressive activity on campus. Some students may have been targeted due to having committed minor crimes such as traffic violations. According to a lawsuit filed on behalf of students, many were targeted because of their country of origin, particularly those from African, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and Asian backgrounds.

These repressive tactics and the summary revocation of people's immigration status demonstrate an utter lack of respect for their human rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, due process, and to be free from discrimination.

I urge you to restore the visas and immigration status of these students and visitors, release all students from immigration detention, refrain from deporting any of them, and end the targeting of students based on their immigration statuses and for exercising their human rights.

Yours sincerely,

Take Action

Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.

Click [here](#) to report your action(s) on UA 42.25. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Secretary Kristi Noem
Department of Homeland Security
300 7th St, SW,
Washington, DC 20024 USA
Email: dhssecretary@hq.dhs.gov

Please take action as soon as possible until October 21, 2025

Urgent Action: Protect Freedom of Press

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent U.S. government agency authorized and overseen by Congress to implement and enforce U.S. communication laws. Since President Trump appointed Brendan Carr as FCC Chairman, the FCC has weaponized routine procedures--such as threatening license revocation and launching investigations—against independent media outlets that President Trump has repeatedly attacked in public to discredit and silence. The FCC has used its regulatory power to undermine freedom of the press. Call on the FCC to maintain its independence and respect and protect the human right to freedom of expression.

The Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") is meant to be a regulatory, independent agency separate from the executive's agenda. Instead, it appears to be using its regulatory power invested by Congress to enact a specific political agenda against media outlets and journalists, particularly

those that President Trump has publicly criticized and targeted.

On February 18, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14215, which aims at making all agencies, including independent regulatory agencies that by law are accountable to Congress, like the FCC, to be instead accountable to the president. The following is a list of examples, demonstrating a concerning and growing trend:

On January 21, 2025, Chairman Carr announced the termination of DEI initiatives within the FCC following Trump's executive orders terminating all DEI efforts in the federal government.

On January 22, 2025, the FCC re-opened a complaint and investigation into CBS for supposed "news distortion" regarding a Kamala Harris interview after the complaint had recently been dismissed on January 16, 2025 (four days prior to President Trump's inauguration). Trump claimed that CBS engaged in "unlawful acts of election and voter interference." 5

On January 29, 2025, Chairman Carr announced an investigation into National Public Radio (“NPR”) and Public Broadcasting Service (“PBS”) for allegedly violating commercial laws as non-commercial educational broadcast stations. The previous year, President Trump called NPR a “total scam” to be de-funded by the government. NPR and PBS receive funding appropriation through Congress since they provide critical resources for communicating with marginalized and rural communities. As such, they are prohibited from airing advertisements.

On February 11, 2025, Chairman Carr sought to enforce the termination of DEI initiatives upon private entities as a form of FCC regulation. Chairman Carr opened an investigation into two big telecommunication companies, Comcast and NBC Universal, accusing them of violating FCC and civil rights laws. On February 27, 2025 Chairman Carr announced the FCC would be investigating Verizon for its hiring practices related to DEI.

These incidents demonstrate concerning examples of the U.S. government’s weaponization of independent agencies to suppress and control the media.

States have a duty to protect journalists and not to persecute them in an effort to control the free flow of information. A free media is not only beneficial, but necessary in a free society. By exposing human rights abuses and uplifting the voices of marginalized communities, the media can at its best encourage the proper application of justice and stimulate debates that can defuse situations that might otherwise lead to conflict. The FCC must urgently maintain its independence from the administration to ensure the continued freedom of the press in the U.S.

Sample Letter

To Chairman Carr,

The FCC has a responsibility to respect and protect the human right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press. However, the FCC has taken actions that appear to be politically motivated to target certain media organizations the President has attacked, undermining free press.

In early 2025, the FCC reopened a dismissed complaint against the outlet, CBS News, for allegations regarding its editing choices of its interview with former Vice President, and then-presidential candidate, Kamala Harris. In this case, President Trump accused CBS of election interference.

Subsequently, the FCC launched an investigation into independent public media stations, National Public Radio (“NPR”) and Public Broadcasting Service (“PBS”), for allegedly violating their noncommercial terms. President Trump has called for NPR to be defunded.

Lastly, the FCC’s demand that private media organizations eliminate their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs for the retention and approval of licenses and/or business deals, sets a dangerous precedent where the FCC leverages licensing and other decisions to interfere in independent media companies’ operations, impacting their right to freedom of expression.

These actions reflect a dangerous misuse of government authority to intimidate media outlets and risk creating a chilling effect on all independent media. We call on the FCC to reaffirm its commitment to independence and service to the public by:

- Protecting and respecting the human right to freedom of expression, including free press and closing politically motivated investigations that weaponize FCC authority.*
 - Conducting investigations with transparency, impartiality, and independence.*
 - Ending interference with the independence of media outlets and their internal DEI programs*
- Sincerely,*

TAKE ACTION:

Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.

Chairman Brendan Carr
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554, USA
Email/website: brendan.carr@fcc.gov
www.fcc.gov

Please take action as soon as possible until
July 14th, 2025