



AI Group 48 Portland, Oregon

April 2026 Newsletter

Next Meeting April 9th on Zoom

200 Organizations and Experts Call for an End to Trump's Threats of War Crimes and Commit to Pursuing Accountability

More than 200 leading human rights, humanitarian, civil liberties, faith-based and environmental organizations, think tanks and experts have issued a joint urgent statement in response to President Trump's threat regarding Iran that "a whole civilization will die tonight" if his demands are not met.

"Such language describes a grave atrocity if carried out," stated the open letter signed by organizations including Amnesty International USA, Human Rights Watch, Refugees International, and Oxfam America. "A threat to wipe out 'a whole civilization' may amount to a threat of genocide. Genocide is a crime defined by the Genocide Convention and by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as committing one or more of several acts "with intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, racial or religious groups as such."

The statement also outlines the legal implications of President's Trump's threats. "The law is clear that civilians must not be targeted, and they must also be protected from indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks. Strikes on civilian infrastructure – such as the recent attack on a bridge and the attacks President Trump is repeatedly threatening to carry out to destroy power plants – have devastating consequences for the civilian population and environment."

The statement also urges all parties to respect international law, noting that those responsible for atrocities, including crimes against humanity and war crimes, can and must be held accountable. held accountable."

Urgent Action: Health Concerns for Uyghur Detained for Decade

Name and Pronoun: Ekpar Asat (he/him)

Ekpar Asat is not just a well-travelled, educated businessman; he is also a Uyghur. And because of this, he has been detained since April 2016, partly incommunicado, while his family has faced significant challenges as they advocate for his release. Finally able to visit him in mid-2025, his family expressed concerns for his physical and mental health. Chinese authorities should urgently end his arbitrary detention and take concrete steps to implement UN recommendations, including the release of all other individuals detained solely because of their ethnicity, language, religious belief or expression.

Ekpar Asat is a Uyghur tech entrepreneur, media founder and philanthropist dedicated to helping older people and children with disabilities. He founded a popular social media app that featured information on a variety of current affairs and cultural topics. He went missing in April 2016, after which he was later convicted without any known trial on charges of "inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination" and allegedly sentenced to 15 years in prison. According to his family, they only found out about the trial through communications between the Chinese authorities and a few US senators in December 2019 and January 2020. He is currently detained in a prison in Xinjiang's Aksu Prefecture.



Ekpar Asat was finally able to communicate with his family in January 2021 for the first time since 2016. Based on this communication, his family reported that his health appeared to have deteriorated. During the three-minute video conversation with his family members in late January 2021, he was seen to have lost a lot of

weight and looked pale with black spots on his face. He told his family members that his health was declining both physically and mentally. The 2025 visit to Aksu Prison was an important moment for the family, but there are concerns that the distance and cost of the travel may preclude regular visits – even where those are in principle guaranteed by the Chinese authorities.

Xinjiang is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China. More than half of the region's population of 22 million people belong to mostly Turkic and predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, including Uyghurs (around 11.3 million), Kazakhs (around 1.6 million) and other populations whose languages, cultures and ways of life vary distinctly from those of the Han ethnic group, who comprise the vast majority of the population in the rest of China.

Since 2017, under the guise of a campaign against "terrorism" and "religious extremism", the Chinese authorities have carried out massive and systematic abuses against Muslims living in Xinjiang. It is estimated that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in internment camps throughout Xinjiang since 2017, under vague definitions of extremism that have allowed for widespread targeting of individuals who peaceful-

Graphics used are either in the public domain or from Amnesty International

ly express their cultural identity. In 2021, Amnesty International found China to have committed at least the crimes against humanity of torture, imprisonment and persecution against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang, alongside other serious human rights violations.

In August 2022, the OHCHR released a long-awaited report complementing those findings and stating that the Chinese authorities' arbitrary and discriminatory detention and treatment of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim groups in Xinjiang may constitute crimes under international law, in particular crimes against humanity. In August 2024, marking two years since their report was published, the OHCHR issued a statement emphasising that "many problematic laws and policies remain in place" in China, despite their clear concerns and concrete recommendations.

Most recently, in his February 2026 Oral Update to the Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called on Chinese authorities to "stop using vague criminal, administrative and national security provisions to suppress the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights... and to release all those arbitrarily detained."

He added that he "regretted the lack of follow-up by the authorities on previous recommendations and on accountability, to protect the rights of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, and of Tibetans in their regions."

Sample Letter

Dear Secretary-General Chen,

I am writing to express my grave concern for Uyghur tech entrepreneur Ekpar Asat, who was taken into custody nearly a decade ago by Chinese authorities and, according to your government, tried and convicted of "inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination". He is reportedly serving a 15-year sentence, but his family has never yet received court documents attesting to his trial, and whether he was provided with a lawyer.

It is distressing to learn that his detention and imprisonment in Aksu Prison have been marked by concerns about the conditions and treatment he faces, which appear to fall short of the standards set out in international human rights standards. For example, his family has reported that from January 2019 to at least 2021, he was held in solitary confinement. The

first video conversation his family had with him, in January 2021, raised serious concerns about his health, including lack of sunlight exposure and malnutrition and lack of access to adequate medical care.

In mid-2025, for the first time, Ekpar's family was able to make the arduous 12-hour journey from their home to visit Aksu Prison. His sister, Rayhan Asat, is more concerned than ever that the imprisonment is having serious impacts on his physical and mental health. I therefore call on you to:

- Release Ekpar Asat immediately and provide him with compensation for his decade-long ordeal, as set out by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in their Opinion 88/2022 finding his detention arbitrary and in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;*

- Ensure that, pending his immediate release, Ekpar Asat is treated in full accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), and specifically he is not subject to torture or other ill-treatment, including poor conditions of detention, inadequate food and health care and prolonged solitary confinement; and*

- Transfer Ekpar Asat from Aksu Prison to a prison in Urumqi, and ensure he has regular, unrestricted access to a lawyer of his choice and his family.*

Yours sincerely,

TAKE ACTION:

Please write an appeal in your own words or using the provided model letter.

Chen Xiaojiang

Secretary-General, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Committee
2 Jiankang Lu, Urumqi 830002
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
People's Republic of China

Please take action as soon as possible until November 1st, 2026.

Click [here](#) to report your action(s) on UA 11.26. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Americas: States Intensify Crackdown on Civil Society Through Anti-NGO Laws

March 23rd, 2026 -- Several countries across the Americas are adopting restrictive legal frameworks to weaken, control, and even dismantle civil society organizations, Amnesty International said today as it launched its new report [Tearing Up the Social Fabric: Impact of Restrictive Laws on Civil Society Organizations in the Americas](#).

Between 2024 and 2025, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela adopted or reformed legal frameworks that impose disproportionate controls on civil society organizations (CSOs), directly affecting their ability to support communities, defend human rights, operate, and access resources.

“What we are seeing is a worrying regional pattern. So-called ‘anti-NGO laws’ reflect the rise of authoritarian practices aimed at silencing critical voices and consolidating power at any cost,” said Ana Piquer, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

Amnesty International’s comparative analysis identified common elements across the laws adopted in the region.

In all countries analyzed, the approval of these laws was preceded by campaigns of stigmatization against civil society organizations and human rights defenders. Authorities, legislators and allied voices labelled these organizations as “internal enemies”, “foreign agents” or “anti-patriotic”, fueling public distrust and creating a climate of intimidation. In some cases —such as in Paraguay— this included racist and misogynistic rhetoric, fostering an environment of fear and self-censorship.

These laws were also adopted without adequate public consultation or dialogue. Although justified in the name of transparency or the prevention of financial crimes, in most cases sufficient regulatory mechanisms already existed to achieve these goals. The speed of their approval, the lack of evidence supporting alleged risks, and the absence of impact assessments reveal that their real purpose is to expand state control over civil society.

The laws analyzed include broad and ambiguous definitions such as “public order”, “political activity”, “social interest” or “distortion of objectives”, allowing discretionary interpretation and enabling selective

enforcement against critical organizations and individuals.

They also establish administrative registration systems that condition the operation of organizations on state approval, without clear deadlines and under opaque criteria. These mechanisms amount to prior authorization, which is prohibited under international human rights standards.

In addition, organizations are required to comply with repetitive and excessive obligations, including detailed financial and operational reports, inventories, and prior notifications on the use of funds. These requirements not only duplicate existing regulations, but also divert human and financial resources away from their core work.

In Venezuela, for example, administrative discretion and impossible requirements have hindered the work of human rights organizations by imposing registration processes under opaque criteria, demanding sensitive information,

and threatening sanctions.

Control over funding is another central element. Restrictions on access to international cooperation, abusive taxation —such as in El Salvador— and prior authorization requirements to receive funds have undermined the sustainability of essential projects, particularly those related to human rights, gender, the environment and Indigenous peoples.

In some contexts, banks and donors have conditioned their relationships on compliance with these laws, leading to the reduction or cancellation of programs that support vulnerable populations.

These laws also require the disclosure of detailed information about donors, beneficiaries and staff, without effective data protection safeguards. In hostile environments, this exposes human rights defenders, LGBTIQ+ people, survivors of violence and Indigenous communities to increased risks of surveillance and persecution.

Moreover, several legal frameworks establish disproportionate sanctions with wide discretionary powers, including excessive fines, freezing of bank accounts, confiscation of assets, suspension or cancellation of legal status, and even criminal penalties.



The Indonesian President's threat to "regulate" observers endangers civil liberties.

Amnesty International Indonesia Press Release

Responding to the President's statement that he would discipline observers who were unpatriotic and did not like the success of his government, the Executive Director of Amnesty International Indonesia, Usman Hamid, said: "We condemn President Prabowo's statement threatening to "regulate" government critics as "unpatriotic." This is clearly a flawed way of thinking, as if criticism is a disorder that must be controlled. This anti-criticism attitude needs to be corrected because it can harm freedom of expression.

Using intelligence to monitor criticism is also an abuse of power that threatens freedom of expression. Intelligence agencies should focus on reporting early detection materials to the President to prevent national security threats, as stipulated in Law No. 17 of 2011 concerning State Intelligence. Intelligence is not a tool for monitoring observers or civil society members critical of the government.

The President should show sympathy for the numerous critics who have experienced terror and intimidation, including the acid attack on KontraS activist Andrie Yunus. He should also provide direction and full support to the police, who just released the results of their initial investigation today (March 16).

As of the fourth day, no suspects have been named or detained by the police. Therefore, direction and support from the President, the House of Representatives (DPR), and the public are needed to ensure the police quickly apprehend the perpetrators.

"The president needs to end the labeling of critics as "unpatriotic" or "foreign stooges" because it is dangerous, especially when accompanied by intelligence surveillance."

This evoked the trauma of repression during the authoritarian New Order era. Past rulers once used the term "beat up" against media leaders under the pretext of "enforcing the implementation of the constitution." The term "regulate" directly violates citizens' constitutional rights to freedom of opinion and expression, which are also expressly guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Indonesia has ratified.

Even more concerning, this threatening statement was made amidst a reign of terror engulfing civilians. Just hours earlier, at midnight on March 12, 2026, Andrie Yunus, an activist who persistently defended victims of human rights violations, was the target of an attempted murder by an unknown group of assailants who used acid, allegedly a strong acid, on his face and body.

Moreover, the victim is now suffering from serious grade III injuries to the right eye due to exposure to chemical substances and 24% burns to the right side of the face, torso, and both upper limbs.

In this vulnerable situation, the president's rhetoric is extremely dangerous because it could be misinterpreted by authorities on the ground as legitimizing repression against human rights defenders and citizens who speak critically about the government.

"Therefore, the President must immediately clarify the meaning of the term "order." The President and his staff must stop all forms of verbal intimidation that could potentially trigger human rights

violations and ensure a safe space for civil liberties. Remember, this country was not built on threats and silencing, but on protecting the fundamental rights of citizens, including the right to express their opinions."

According to media reports, President Prabowo Subianto, while chairing a cabinet meeting in Jakarta on Friday, March 13, 2026, said he would discipline observers who did not like the success of his government and were not patriotic.

The President admitted that he had intelligence data on observers who frequently criticized him, including knowing all the motives behind the criticism and who supported the critics.

He suspected that the observers' attitudes arose as a result of pressure from other parties who felt they had lost, had no power, and their livelihoods were threatened.

The president's statement came after Finance Minister Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa reported that the national economy was in good condition and asked the President not to worry about analyses by social media observers who said the national economy was deteriorating.



Urgent Action: Journalists Face Criminal Charges

Name and Pronoun: Georgia Fort, she/her

Journalist Georgia Fort, along with other members of the press, documented a protest on January 18, 2026, inside a church in Minnesota as one of the church's pastors was an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) field office director. For this journalistic coverage, the U.S. Department of Justice is prosecuting Fort and others representing the press, with serious criminal charges, including a hate crime. Since January 2025, the media and journalists have been targeted for reporting on the Trump administration's actions. These charges seek to intimidate and silence journalists. We urge the authorities to withdraw all charges against members of the press.

In December 2025, the Trump administration launched a federal immigration crackdown known as "Operation Metro Surge" in the St. Paul/Minneapolis, Minnesota region ("Twin Cities"). The Department of Homeland Security deployed more than 3,000 federal immigration agents, who used military tactics against residents, causing fear and panic throughout the Twin Cities. Residents began to mobilize in a number of ways, including organizing protests against "Operation Metro Surge".

On January 7, 2026, ICE agents killed Renee Good, a community observer on federal immigration actions in Minneapolis. Following her death, on January 18, a group of demonstrators protested inside a church in the city of St. Paul because one of the church's pastors was an acting field office director for ICE there at the time. Journalist Georgia Fort and others representing the press arrived at the scene to document the protest.

Video footage of the protest made public by Don Lemon, one of the journalists at the scene, shows peaceful demonstrators chanting slogans that called for justice for Renee Good. Within a few days, the protesters were arrested. The federal government sought to arrest the journalists and other members of the press at the same time, but their request was denied on three separate occasions by a magistrate judge, district court judge, and appellate court judge. The Department of Justice then called for a grand jury hearing resulting in a grand jury indictment on three felony charges, including a hate crime statute against Georgia Fort and two other members of the press who reported on the demonstrations. In the early morning on January 30, Georgia Fort and the others from the

press were arrested (an additional press member was indicted in late February). Georgia Fort, who is the founder of a press organization dedicated to delivering empowering stories that speak to Black communities, livestream reported federal agents arriving at her home in the early hours to arrest her.

When the Trump administration deployed more than 3,000 federal immigration agents in Minnesota, the justification was to target the Somali American community who the President publicly called "garbage." Three out of four of the members of the press facing charges are Black Americans. For being members of the press, the government has arrested them under a hate crime statute and a 19th century statute that was originally aimed to rein in the violent white supremacy hate group Ku Klux Klan's mass assault against formerly enslaved African Americans.

Since January 2025, the Trump administration has consistently attacked journalists for reporting on its actions with scrutiny. Examples of these attacks include the deportation of USA-based journalist and asylum-seeker Mario Guevara who reported on ICE raids; the FBI seizure of personal and professional devices from a Washington, DC reporter's home; the White House's launch of a website focused on attacking journalists and media outlets not in line with the administration; and the weaponization of the Federal Communications Commission's authority to approve licensing and corporate media mergers based on corporate rejection of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. The active targeting and discrediting of reporters and the media by those in power is a common authoritarian practice.

Sample Letter

Dear U.S. Attorney Rosen,

I am writing to express deep concern about the prosecution of Georgia Fort and other members of the press for simply covering a protest in Minneapolis on January 18, 2026. The arrest and subsequent prosecution of Georgia Fort and others from the press represent a disturbing escalation of a systemic disregard for human rights.

As I am sure you are aware, Article 19 of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the United States has ratified, protects

the right to freedom of expression, including press freedom and the right of journalists to seek and share information. For the Department of Justice to prosecute Georgia Fort and other members of the press with criminal charges, including a hate crime, for reporting on a protest inside Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota —where one of the pastors was an acting ICE field office director — is to target them for simply doing their job as journalists and breaches their human rights.

Reporting is not a crime. Rather, safeguarding freedom of expression and press freedom is essential to ensuring government officials and leaders are held accountable for their actions. These charges have a chilling and intimidating effect on journalists covering issues that deeply affect their communities.

I therefore strongly urge that you drop the charges against Georgia Fort and the other members of the press in the case of United States v. Levy Armstrong (0:26-cr-00025) in the District Court of Minnesota.

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.

U.S. Attorney for Minnesota, Daniel Rosen
U.S. Courthouse
316 N. Robert Street, Suite 404
St. Paul, MN 55101 USA
Email: usamn.pressoffice@usdoj.gov

Please take action as soon as possible until May 10, 2026

Click [here](#) to report your action(s) on UA 16.26. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Urgent Action: Israel / Occupied Palestinian Territories Palestinian Journalists Forcibly Disappeared

Name and Pronoun: Haitham Abdelwahed, Nidal al-Waheidi (Both he/his)

Haitham Abdelwahed (25) and Nidal al-Waheidi (31) are two journalists from the occupied Gaza Strip who work for the independent outlets Ein Media and an-Najah channel respectively. They were detained by Israeli forces on October 7 while they were reporting on the Hamas-led attack near/at the Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint. Two other journalists from Ain Media have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 7: Ibrahim Lafi and Roshdi Sarraj.

Israeli human rights organization, HaMoked, has filed several requests to Israeli authorities and two petitions to the Israeli Supreme Court to demand information on the whereabouts of Nidal and Haitham and on the legal grounds for their detention. The Supreme court's response to one of these petitions was that "Israel held no obligation towards residents of the Gaza Strip, given that it was a territory controlled by a terrorist organization and did not establish what were the legal framework and duties incumbent on Israel in holding Gazans." From October 7 to December 11, HaMoked alone received 816 inquiries on missing Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. The actual number of those missing is expected to be much higher, with many families unable to report on their missing loved

ones due to communication blackouts and concerns over negative implications of publicity.

Horrifying accounts and cases of torture and degrading treatment of Palestinian detainees and prisoners have been shared by released prisoners and detainees as well as lawyers who visit them. Since October 7, Israeli authorities have confirmed that six Palestinian detainees have died in Israeli custody, the autopsy of at least one of them showed clear signs of beatings and torture. Two of these detainees are from the occupied Gaza Strip, and their families were only able to learn about their deaths from other detainees from Gaza who were released. The bodies of all six detainees who died in Israeli custody since October 7 are still withheld by the Israeli authorities. The cases of torture, humiliation, and degrading treatment were shared widely online in the forms of gruesome scenes in images and videos. A number of those detained were identified as journalists, school headmasters, and shop owners. They were detained in Gaza then taken to a military detention center outside of Gaza where some were subjected to further torture and other ill-treatment.

The legal basis for the ongoing detention of Ni-

dal and Haitham, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Palestinians from Gaza remains vague, but since October 7, Israeli authorities have also resumed the implementation of the “Unlawful Combatants” Law, a category which is not recognized by international law, to indefinitely hold without charge or trial at least 260 Palestinians from the occupied Gaza Strip, as of December 1, 2023. According to this law, and the emergency regulations attached to it, a detainee may meet a lawyer within 28 days of their detention, but a court may deny the right to counsel for up to 80 days. The court may approve the detention without a defense lawyer present.

Sample Letter

*Dear Brig. Gen. Itai Ofir,
Nidal al-Waheidi and Haitham Abdelwahed are journalists from the occupied Gaza Strip. Both were detained by Israeli forces on October 7 while they were reporting the Hamas-led attack and are held in conditions constituting enforced disappearance. Since then, Israeli authorities have refused to disclose their whereabouts or the legal grounds and reasons for their arrest. Two and a half months since their disappearance, and no information has been shared about their fate or whereabouts. Israeli authorities must immediately disclose their whereabouts and the legal grounds for their arrest, grant them access to legal representation and ensure their humane treatment. Unless charged with an internationally recognized criminal offence, they must be immediately released.*

I am concerned about the enforced disappearance of Haitham Abdelwahed, (25) and Nidal al-Waheidi (31), two journalists from the occupied Gaza Strip whose whereabouts have remained unknown since October 7, 2023. The detention of the two journalists was widely documented on that day as they were reporting from Beit Hanoun/Erez crossing. Two-and-a-half months since the two went missing while on duty, their families, colleagues and friends have received no information about them from the Israeli authorities, not even confirmation that they are still alive.

The families’ fears have been exacerbated by the Israeli army’s confirmation in November that two workers from the Gaza Strip had died while in the custody of the Israeli military. As recently as December 18, the Israeli army told Israeli daily, Haaretz that a “number of” detainees from the Gaza Strip died

in custody at the military detention facilities in the Beersheba Airfield, also known as Sdeh Teyman, where hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza are held in conditions that violate the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

We urge you to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Nidal al-Waheidi and Haitham Abdelwahed, detail the legal grounds for their detention, ensure their humane treatment, including access to medical services and protection from torture and other ill-treatment, and grant them access to the lawyers appointed by their families. Unless they are charged promptly with a recognizable criminal offense and granted a fair trial in accordance with international standards, they must be immediately released.

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.

Military Advocate General
Maj. Gen. Itai Ofir
Fax: +972(0)35694526
Email: Pazar@idf.il / s.patzar@idf.il
Salutation: Dear Brig. Gen. Itai Ofir,

Embassy of Israel in the United States
Ambassador Dr. Yechiel (Michael) Leiter
3514 International Drive, NW,
Washington DC 20008
Twitter/X: @yechielleiter

Please take action as soon as possible until June 2nd, 2026

Click [here](#) to report your action(s) on Second UA 119.23. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.



“Where after do human rights begin? In small places, close to home-- so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Eleanor Roosevelt -- Remarks at the United Nations,” March 27, 1958

Group Coordinators

Marty Fromer and Terrie Rodello

Newsletter -- Daniel Webb

OR Area Coordinator -- Marty Fromer

Indonesia actions -- Max White

China / Uyghur actions -- Marty Fromer

Central Africa/ Oregon State Death

Penalty Abolition-- Terrie Rodello

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