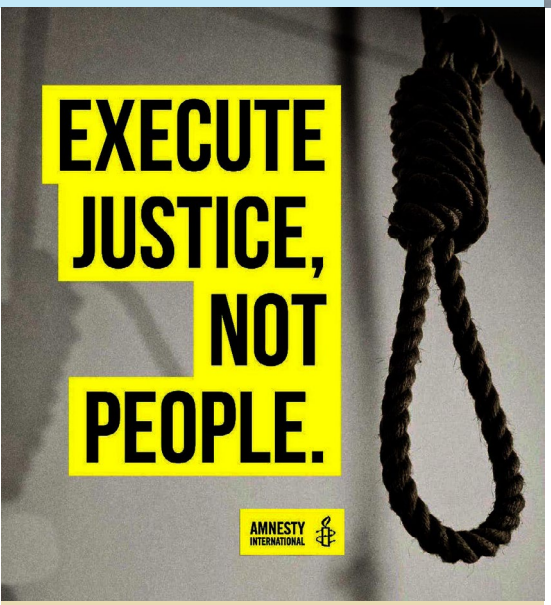
AI Group 48
Portland, Oregon

May 2026 Newsletter

Next Meeting May 14th on Zoom



Urge Governor Newsom to Commute all Death Row Sentences in California

Nearly 600 people are on death row in California. Before Governor Newsom leaves office in January 2027, he has power to commute death sentences across the state. He can commute many of them himself, and the rest, he can ask the California Supreme Court to act. Help make support for ending the death penalty impossible to ignore. Sign this petition to urge Governor Newsom to finish the job and commute every death sentence in California.

Urgent Action: China • Tibetan Religious Leader Disappeared

Name and Pronoun: Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche/ (he/him)

Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche, a Tibetan religious and education leader, has been missing since December 2025 after he was reportedly taken into custody by authorities in Qinghai province, China.

Since then, there has been almost no information about his fate or whereabouts. The authorities should urgently disclose his location, ensure his rights are protected, and release him unless there is sufficient credible evidence of a recognizable criminal offense.

Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche is a Tibetan religious and education leader from Chikdril (Jiuzhi) County in Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province. Born in 1967, he is recognized as a reincarnate lama (Rinpoche) and has long played an important role in local religious and community life. He founded and led a monastery in Mentang Township and established a vocational training school around 2010, which provided education in Tibetan language, culture, and vocational skills.

The school offered both general subjects and specialized training, including Tibetan language, traditional arts, medicine, and cultural practices. According to publicly available information, it grew into one of the largest vocational schools of its kind in the region, at one point enrolling over 800 students and graduating several thousand, many of whom went on to positions in higher education or employment. The school's work was known to and supported by local officials, including inspections as evidenced by state media reports. In early November 2025, local government departments conducted inspections at the school, indicating that it remained operational shortly before Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche's reported detention. The school was reportedly closed following his disappearance, and students were sent home.

Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche was also active in local public structures, including as a member of the county-level political consultative system and in roles linked to the local people's congress. He also supported local livelihoods, including through business activities, and was widely regarded as a community leader who provided financial and social sup-

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

port to families in need.

Since his presumed detention in December 2025, the only news of Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche's status are limited word-of-mouth reports that he was "under investigation". In China, such terminology has often been used to refer to detention under the criminal investigation phase – prior to the procuratorate approving criminal detention or filing an indictment.

Access to information from Tibetan-populated areas remains highly restricted, particularly for journalists, researchers and human rights organizations, making it difficult to independently verify cases of detention and disappearance. Over the years, Amnesty International has documented several cases, such as those of Tibetan religious leader Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, monk Rinchen Tsultrim and language activist Tashi Wangchuk, involving limited access to counsel, lack of transparency and other fair trial concerns.
In recent years, authorities in Tibetan areas – despite their nominal "autonomous" designation - have imposed increasing restrictions on Tibetan-language education and religious practices. Educational and cultural initiatives that promote Tibetan language and identity have faced heightened scrutiny and control. Religious leaders and educators have also been subject to surveillance, restrictions and, in some cases, detention, as part of broader state policies promoting "ethnic unity" and a unified national identity, alongside expanded ideological education and increased emphasis on Mandarin Chinese as the primary language of instruction. These measures have further narrowed the space for cultural and religious expression and reinforced state control over Tibetan Buddhist practices.

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 34.26. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Secretary Wu Xiaojun
Qinghai Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
No. 12 Xida Street, Xining,
Qinghai Province, 81000,
People's Republic of China
Email: qhswzqyj@163.com

Send a copy of your letter to the address below

Embassy of China in the United States
Ambassador Xie Fang
3505 International Place, NW,
Washington DC 20008
Email: chinaembpress_us@mfa.gov.cn

Please take action as soon as possible until October 15th, 2026

Sample Letter

Dear Secretary Wu,

I am gravely concerned about the fate and whereabouts of Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche, a Tibetan religious leader and founder of a monastery and a vocational school in Chikdril (Jiuzhi County in Golog (Guoluo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province.

According to secondhand reports, Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche was taken into custody by authorities on or around December 4, 2025. Since then, there has been almost no information made available about where he is being held or on what legal basis. In January 2026, individuals following the case reportedly received indications that he was "under investigation". It is not clear whether he has had access to a lawyer of his choice.

It is alarming that individuals with knowledge of the case have reportedly been warned by local authorities not to share information about the case, suggesting officially backed efforts to control information and discourage external reporting through intimidation and other tactics.

I urge you to disclose legal proof of Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche's whereabouts, release him immediately unless there is credible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognizable offense, ensure his protection from torture and other ill-treatment and access to a lawyer of his choice and to his family, and end intimidation and restrictions against those seeking information about his case.

Yours sincerely,

Name and Pronouns: Tony Von Carruthers (He/him)

Tony Carruthers, a 57-year-old Black man, is scheduled to be executed in Tennessee, USA on May 21, 2026. He was one of three men charged in a triple murder in Memphis in 1994. He was forced to represent himself by the judge, in violation of international safeguards in death penalty cases, due to his behavior towards appointed counsel. His appeal lawyers attribute this behavior to his serious mental disability and maintain that he was incompetent either to stand trial or to defend himself and is incompetent to be executed. We urge the governor to stop this execution and to grant clemency.

Three people – two men and the mother of one of them – disappeared in Memphis, Tennessee, in late February 1994. A week later, their bodies were found beneath a newly interred coffin in a grave in a Memphis cemetery. Three men were charged with the murders. One of the men was found hanged in his jail cell before trial, his death ruled a suicide. The other two men – the brother of the man who had hanged himself and Tony Carruthers – were brought to a joint trial in April 1996. Both were convicted of three counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to death.

Before the trial, a series of lawyers were appointed to represent Tony Carruthers. Each was allowed to withdraw in the face of their client's complaints against them. Eventually, in January 1996, the judge decided that he had forfeited his right to a lawyer and forced Carruthers to represent himself against his wishes and over his protests. After the ruling, Tony Carruthers offered to accept his most recent lawyer continuing to represent him (the lawyer himself was prepared to), to apologize, and to withdraw the accusations he had made against him. The judge refused, deciding that the defendant was merely seeking to further delay the trial. Three days later, during jury selection, the prosecution asked for a delay due to one of its witnesses being ill. The judge granted a three-month delay. Tony Carruthers made another request for a lawyer. The judge refused.

When the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the state court decisions in 2018, the three-judge panel showed its concern. It was "troubling", it said, that the trial judge had "required Carruthers to proceed pro se through his capital murder trial without giving him the warnings typically required in the distinct context of a defendant's affirmatively waiving his right to counsel." One of the judges raised the issue of "mental illness" being the cause of a defendant's misconduct and concluded that a criminal defendant must not be denied their right to counsel "as a form of punishment".

International law requires that anyone facing the death penalty is provided "adequate legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings" and that this should go "above and beyond the protections afforded in non-capital cases." The UN Human Rights Committee, the expert body established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the USA ratified in 1992, has emphasized that under the treaty "all accused of a criminal charge" have the right "in full equality" to defend themselves in person or through "legal counsel of their own choosing". Contrary to what happened in this case, the right to counsel cannot be forfeited and the defendant forced into self-representation as a sanction for improper conduct.

The use of the death penalty against individuals with serious mental disabilities is prohibited under international law and standards. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed by the USA in 2009, requires states to provide "reasonable accommodation" to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of their human rights on an equal basis with others. In this case, the state responded to a defendant's conduct attributable to his serious mental disability by effectively punishing him for it. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases unconditionally.

Sample Letter

Dear Governor,

Please stop the May 21, 2026, execution of Tony Carruthers. After the judge lost patience with Mr. Carruthers' conduct toward a succession of lawyers, he was forced to represent himself at his 1996 trial and sentencing. Under international law, self-representation must not be imposed on a defendant; a person cannot be deemed to have forfeited their right to a lawyer as a punishment for misconduct. Carrying out a death sentence imposed through unfair proceedings

would violate the right to life guaranteed under international human rights law.

Tony Carruthers' self-representation was deemed so prejudicial to his co-defendant – who was tried alongside him and was also convicted of three counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to death – that the co-defendant was granted a new trial. He was allowed to plead to lesser charges, sentenced to 27 years in prison, and released in 2015. Tony Carruthers was clearly prejudiced by his forced self-representation given his lack of competence and his conduct in court, yet his convictions and death sentence have been upheld. Today, as far as is known, he is set to become the first person in the USA in more than a century to be executed after being forced to represent himself at trial.

Tony Carruthers has a severe mental illness (disability) with symptoms including paranoid delusions and distorted thought processes. He also has serious brain damage. Although he is said to be aware of his conviction and impending execution, he lacks a rational understanding of them, raising the prospect of an unconstitutional execution that also violates international law. Other aspects of his case presented in the clemency petition before you raise additional serious concerns. I urge you to grant clemency and commute his death sentence.

Sincerely,

Take Action:

Write a letter to the government official(s) listed.

Governor Bill Lee
1st Floor, State Capitol
600 Dr Martin L. King, Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243, USA
Webmail: https://www.tn.gov/governor/contact-us/share-opinion.html

Please take action as soon as possible until May 21st, 2026

Click here to report your action(s) on UA 38.26. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

The Hate is Intersectional: Xenophobic TfGBV Against Racialized Women and 2SLGBTQI+ People in Canada

An innovative new research briefing by Amnesty International breaks down the "virulent cocktail" of xenophobic, racist and misogynistic hate targeting racialized women and LGBTQI+ people in Canada.

Published on May 4, The Hate is Intersectional: Xenophobic Technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TfGBV) against Racialized Women and 2SLGBTQIA+ People in Canada exposes a playbook of toxic tropes and tactics spreading across social media as anti-immigrant rhetoric rises both online and offline. Launching alongside the briefing are new social media videos and graphics – part of Amnesty International's global Make It Safe Online campaign – to counter online hate with messages of critical resistance, inclusion, and hope.

"We are in the midst of an epidemic of digital hate-mongering designed to intimidate, dehumanize, and attack racialized migrant women and LGBTQI+ people," said Shreshtha Das, researcher and advisor on gender at Amnesty International.

"These attacks subject racialized women and LGBTQI+ people to a virulent cocktail of misogynist, xenophobic and racist hate that is steeped in ideas of white supremacy. We hope that, by exposing hateful false narratives and how they spread, we can draw attention to the toll it takes, help survivors get the support they need, and contribute to the work of activists fighting back."

Israel's Brazen Interception of Global Sumud Flotilla Bound for Gaza Sparks Fears for 175 Arbitrarily Detained

April 30th, 2026 -- Responding to reports that Israeli forces intercepted 22 vessels and detained around 175 crew members of the Global Sumud Flotilla, which was attempting to break Israel's illegal blockade and deliver essential humanitarian aid to the occupied Gaza Strip, amidst Israel's ongoing genocide, Amnesty International's Senior Director for Research, Advocacy, Policy and Campaigns at Amnesty International, Erika Guevara Rosas, said:

"Israel's brazen and unlawful interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla vessels and the arbitrary detention of dozens of activists, underscores the dangerous consequences of decades of impunity for Israel's ongoing atrocity crimes against Palestinians, including genocide in the Gaza Strip and apartheid, and its unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory.

"It is appalling that activists participating in a peaceful solidarity mission aiming to break Israel's unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip and deliver medical aid and supplies to people facing a catastrophic humanitarian crisis – due to conditions deliberately imposed by Israel -have been arbitrarily detained once again.

"The Israeli navy crossing hundreds of miles at sea just to ensure civilian boats carrying food, baby formula, and medical supplies don't make it to Palestinians reveals the lengths Israel is prepared to go to in order to maintain its cruel and unlawful 19-year-long blockade of the occupied Gaza Strip.

"Despite the so-called ceasefire in Gaza on October 9, 2025, Israel has only allowed extremely limited supplies to reach a population that the vast majority of whom has been forcibly displaced, and is living in extreme deprivation and amidst complete devastation, crammed in as little as the 40% of the Gaza Strip, while the Israeli army has turned the majority of this part of the occupied territory into a deadly no-go zone for Palestinians.

"There are grave concerns for the safety of the around 175 activists arbitrarily detained and being transported to Israel, after their vessels were boarded in international waters near Greece and Israel jammed their communication channels, severing their ability to coordinate or ask for help. Amnesty International has documented ill-treatment and abuse of activists aboard the Global Sumud Flotilla who had been detained in in October 2025 after the Israeli military intercepted its vessels, including sleep deprivation, denial of drinking water and medical care. In Italy, these abuses against 36 Italian activists are currently being investigated by the Prosecutor in Rome, including on allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

"The crew of the intercepted vessels must be immediately and unconditionally released. While in custody, the Israeli authorities must ensure that all activists are immediately granted access to consular support, treated humanely and protected from torture and other ill-treatment. States must urgently support their detained nationals. They must also urgently put in place tangible measure to bring Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza to an end, including by immediately lifting its illegal blockade, and allowing unimpeded humanitarian aid to enter and be distributed across the Gaza Strip. Third states must stop granting Israel impunity for its atrocity crimes and expedite the adoption of measures to bring Israel's unlawful occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory to an end, as indicated by the International Court of Justice in 2024."

House of Representatives Heeds Calls from Advocates, Refuses to Rubber Stamp Billions to ICE and Border Patrol

April 30th, 2026 In response to Congress passing the Department of Homeland Security funding bill that provides no funding for ICE and Border Patrol, Amy Fischer, Director for Refugee and Migrant Rights with Amnesty International USA, said:

"Today Congress ended the longest shut down in history and listened to the calls of millions of people across the country who have been demanding not one more dollar to ICE and Border Patrol. For the first time since the creation of DHS and ICE, Congress refused to rubber stamp the flow of billions of taxpayer dollars to agencies that terrorize our communities, violate the law, and abuse, torture, and kill our neighbors. ICE and Border Patrol's violent actions have inflicted profound damage and violated human rights with impunity. The passage of this bill is a win for the rights and dignity of immigrant communities across the United States.

"While we are heartened that lawmakers passed this funding bill without a single dollar for ICE and Border Patrol, we know that President Trump and his allies in Congress are now pursuing an alternative path to fund ICE and Border Patrol up to $140 billion dollars without reforms via the budget reconciliation process. We remain steadfast in our position that taxpayer dollars must not fund ICE and Border Patrol's cruelty and human rights violations.

"This bill also fails to include the critical reforms that would hold ICE and Border Patrol to account. For communities around the country, the reality on the ground will stay the same and immigrant communities, and those who defend their rights, will continue to face violence at the hands of federal agents. Congress must still act to rein in the lawless actions of ICE and Border Patrol."

Group Coordinators
Marty Fromer and Terrie Rodello
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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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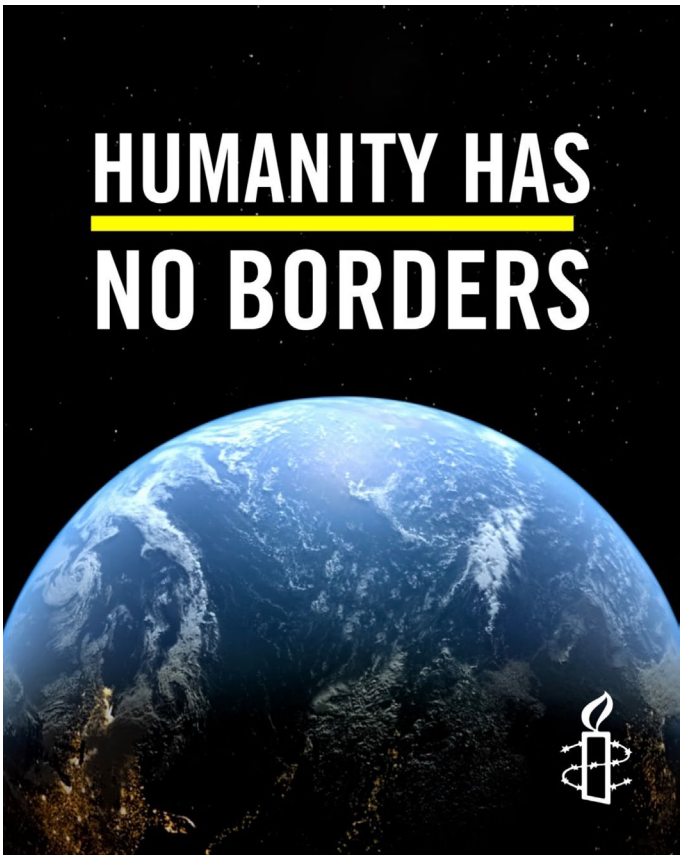
DRC: Rampant ADF Abuses Against Civilians 'War Crimes Which the World Must Not Continue to Ignore' - New Amnesty International Report

Civilians in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are suffering a surge in human rights abuses committed by Allied Democratic Forces' (ADF) fighters that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, Amnesty International said in a new report."I'd Never Seen So Many Bodies": War Crimes by the Allied Democratic Forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo documents violent ADF attacks on civilians; abductions and forced labor; recruitment and use of children; and additional abuses and crimes against women and girls, including forced marriage, forced pregnancy and various other forms of sexual violence.



The acts committed by the Islamic State-linked ADF constitute numerous violations of international humanitarian law, many of which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The attacks are occurring across vast swathes of the eastern DRC, where the Rwanda-backed March 23 Movement (M23) armed group are also involved in largescale attacks against civilians. With international and domestic attention centering on M23's advances as of early 2025, the ADF has seized on the diversion of troops and focus.

"Civilians in the eastern DRC have suffered extensive brutality at the hands of ADF fighters. They have been killed, abducted and tortured in a dehumanizing campaign of abuse," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

"ADF fighters have raided communities and farms, attacked medical facilities, and looted and burned homes. The ADF's violence is contributing to an escalating humanitarian crisis. The group's attacks have increased displacement and disrupted basic services, including access to food, healthcare and education.

"The group's relentless attacks underscore the extent of insecurity and overlapping crises in the eastern DRC and highlight the urgent need for the government and the international community to intensify efforts to protect civilians and bring those responsible to justice.

"These abuses constitute war crimes which the world must not continue to ignore. As part of widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population, they also amount to crimes against humanity."

Amnesty International conducted research in North Kivu province in November 2025. In total, 71 people were interviewed, including 61 in-person interviews with direct witnesses and survivors of attacks, civil society members, military and police officials, and humanitarian actors including from the UN.

The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) has been battling the ADF for years, with some support from the UN mission MONUSCO opens in a new tab. The FARDC and the Uganda Peoples' Defense Forces (UPDF) began a joint military operation to fight the ADF in November 2021.

"They shot at anything that moved"

Amnesty International documented eight ADF attacks in Ituri and North Kivu provinces. Seven of the attacks took place in 2025, and one was in 2024. Witnesses said that security actors, including FARDC troops in nearby bases, did not always respond or arrived late at the scene of attacks.

While the ADF does attack security forces, their primary target in recent years has been civilians.

Fighters deliberately attack civilians not only to steal food, medicines and other supplies, but also in retaliation for military operations.

On September 8, 2025, in the village of Ntoyo, ADF fighters disguised themselves as civilians and mingled among mourners attending a wake before suddenly attacking people. The killing spree – using hammers, axes, machetes and guns – left more than 60 people dead amid an absence of security forces.

One witness said he saw fighters kill his sister with an axe. Another witness described how fighters broke into her house and abducted her four daughters. A third witness found the bodies of her parents in the morning; her father had been shot, while her mother had been struck with a hammer. She said: "I'd never seen so many bodies."

On July 12, , the ADF killed eight people during a raid in Otmaber in Irumu territory in Ituri. One woman told Amnesty International that fighters shot her, her husband, and their seven-year-old son. She said: "After shooting us, they proceeded to burn houses… [My son and] I crawled slowly into a house that wasn't burned and spent the night there… Even in the morning, [the military] didn't come. Everyone had to take care of themselves."

The group has also repeatedly attacked health facilities and raided supplies. In November 2025, a health center in the village of Byambwe was targeted. At least 17 civilians were killed, and four wards were set on fire. An older person who escaped by crawling out of the facility said: "You couldn't stand; they shot at anything that moved."

Several witnesses of attacks said they experienced flashbacks and nightmares. One woman survived being hit in the head with a machete, while her child was killed when their house was set on fire in an August 2025 attack. She said: "I have been consumed by fear."

Another woman who survived the same attack said: "What have we done to deserve these things that are happening to us? How much more must we suffer before this ends?"

Abductions and hostage-taking

Amnesty International documented 46 cases of abduction, including seven cases of hostages held for ransom. Abductees suffered additional abuses and crimes, including forced labor, torture, sexual slavery, and unlawful killings.

Hostages and other abductees were often forced to porter and act as guides for the ADF. Fighters gave them very little food, made them walk for days, and carry heavy loads, all while subjecting them to insults and beatings. Those who showed signs of exhaustion were often killed.

Abductees were moved between camps deep in the forest. Those who were kept for longer periods were compelled to carry out various tasks or face death. This included fetching food and water, cooking, collecting information, picking up deliveries, mining, and performing different tasks during attacks.

One woman who escaped captivity in late 2024 after more than two years told Amnesty International: "They taught us how to kill with weapons and with blades… In the bush, you had to do what you were told. You cannot be weak."

Recruitment and use of children

The ADF is listed by the UN among the groups most responsible for recruitment and use of children in the DRC. The group exploits children in various roles, including as fighters, porters, cooks and lookouts. Many former abductees and witnesses said they saw children believed to be as young as 10 participating in the group's attacks.

Amnesty International interviewed two formerly abducted children, plus three young people abducted when they were children, who were all used by the ADF for various purposes. The interviewees were aged 13-17 when they were abducted.

A young man, who was abducted when he was under 15 and remained in captivity around two years, said: "They put me in a group in charge of looking for food… They preached Islam to us… When it was time

to pray, I prayed with them. If you refused, they could kill you."

A girl who was abducted when she was under 15 said: "They started teaching us Arabic because they were Muslims. After the Arabic lessons they gave us fighting training. When we finished that training, we started taking part in some attacks."

Subjected to numerous abuses, including torture and other ill-treatment, these children should be viewed as victims first and foremost. They should also afforded additional protections as survivors of trafficking who could not legally consent to their own exploitation.

Violence against women and girls

Amnesty International interviewed five women and two girls who were abducted by the ADF and forced into "marriages". Witnesses said "extra-marital" relations were not allowed, however, several interviewees mentioned incidents of sexual violence by ADF fighters towards women and girls outside of "marriage."

Interviews indicate that the ADF gave "wives" – at times multiple ones – to fighters as a recruitment incentive, and that the practice is systematic in the group's camps. The women and girls were subjected to extended periods of sexual and physical violence.

Women and girls also described being forced to convert to Islam and indoctrinated into the group's version of the religion. The women and girls said they were explicitly told by women trainers and camp chiefs they had to accept being given "husbands" or face death; several were made to watch the killings of others who refused orders.

One young woman who was abducted when she was a teenager recounted an exchange she had with the camp's chief: "I said I'm still young. He asked how old I was, and I said 16. He said, 'That is [old] enough; here we give girls as young as 12 husbands. Either you accept a husband or we kill you.' " She described repeated ill-treatment by her "husband," who threatened that she would be "slaughtered" if she attempted to flee.

Six of the seven women and girls who were taken as "wives" said they ended up pregnant as a result of the forced marriages. When these abducted women and girls also managed to escape sexual slavery and domestic servitude, they faced suspicions and stigma. One woman said pressure by her in-laws to kill her two children who were born in the bush almost led to her taking her own life.

Several interviewees said they faced severe economic challenges upon release from the group and struggled to access to medical services and specialized care.

Recommendations

Authorities in the DRC must do more to protect civilians, including by working with the UN and local communities, to improve early warning mechanisms and allow for rapid response ahead of attacks. A comprehensive approach to security and justice and accountability, as well as meaningful reintegration programming, are required to address the needs of communities and survivors.

"Survivors told us that peace and security must be urgently restored in the eastern DRC if they are to rebuild their lives," said Agnès Callamard.

"The Congolese government must take far stronger action to ensure the protection of civilians. The international community must steadfastly support the Congolese state in improving efforts to protect civilians, ensuring justice, and providing long-term, sustainable support to victims and survivors. The disregard in international policy and donor circles to ADF's expansive threat and crimes will only continue to undermine security and human rights in the eastern DRC."

Background

The ADF originated in the 1990s in Uganda, as a merger of opposition groups, before taking refuge in Zaire (now the DRC). In 2019, the Islamic State officially recognized a pledge of allegiance by the ADF, and the group ultimately became the Islamic State's Central Africa Province.