



## October 2021 Newsletter

Our Next Meeting:  
October 14th on Zoom



*Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) is pleased to join Welcome.US, a new national initiative, built across sectors, political parties and all walks of life, to empower Americans to welcome and support our new Afghan neighbors.*

*Refugees leave their homes because they have no other choice. They want the same safety that any of us would want if we were in their shoes. They just want to be part of a safe community again.*

<https://welcome.us>

## Taliban Wasting No Time in Stamping Out Human Rights in Afghanistan Says New Report

(September 20, 2021) The Taliban are steadily dismantling the human rights gains of the last twenty years, said Amnesty International, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) in a new briefing published today, which documents the group's wide-ranging crackdown since their seizure of Kabul little more than five weeks ago.

Contrary to the Taliban's repeated claims that they will respect the rights of Afghans, the briefing, Afghanistan's fall into the hands of the Taliban, details a litany of human rights abuses including targeted killings of civilians and surrendered soldiers and the blockading of humanitarian supplies in the Panjshir Valley, which constitute crimes under international law. Restrictions have also been reimposed on women, freedom of expression and civil society.

"In just over five weeks since assuming control of Afghanistan, the Taliban have clearly demonstrated that they are not serious about protecting or respecting human rights. We have already seen a wave of violations, from reprisal attacks and restrictions on women, to crackdowns on protests, the media and civil society," said Dinushika Dissanayake, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for South Asia.

"Given the prevailing climate of fear, lack of mobile connectivity in many areas, and internet blackouts enforced by the Taliban, these findings are likely to represent just a snapshot of what's happening on the ground. The UN Human Rights Council must establish a robust, independent mechanism with a mandate to document, collect and preserve evidence of ongoing crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations and abuses across Afghanistan."

Attacks on human rights defenders have been reported on a near-daily basis since August 15. The Taliban are conducting door-to-door searches for human rights defenders, forcing many into hiding.

Researchers spoke to Mahmud\*, an Afghan human rights defender who

*all photos used in this newsletter are in the public domain*

managed to get out of the country. Mahmud described how, on the day the Taliban entered Kabul, he received a call asking him to hand over his organizations' vehicles, equipment and money. The caller knew his name and warned him he had no choice but to cooperate.

Over the following days, Mahmud received further phone calls and WhatsApp messages, asking for his home address and requesting to meet him at designated locations. Two colleagues at his NGO had been beaten by the Taliban. Images shared by one of his co-workers and verified by Amnesty International and a forensic pathologist show classical assaultive 'whipmarks' to the back and yellowing bruising to the victim's left arm.

"The threat faced by human rights defenders stranded in Afghanistan is real. They are under attack on all fronts as they are seen as enemies of the Taliban. Their offices and homes have been raided. Their colleagues have been beaten. They are forced into permanent hiding. They live under the constant threat of arrest, torture or worse. Those who managed to leave the country are now stranded in military camps or in neighboring countries, not knowing their final destination nor how they will be able to rebuild their lives that have been shattered overnight," said Delphine Reculeau, Human Rights Defenders Program Director at the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

"The international community must uphold its moral and political commitments and not fail the people who have dedicated their lives to the defense of human rights, gender equality, the rule of law and democratic freedoms in their country, but protect them at all costs."

Two Kabul-based female journalists that Amnesty International spoke to, shared the threats and intimidation they faced following the Taliban takeover. Ayesha\*, who has now fled the capital following warnings from her employer that her life was at risk, said her family had since been visited by the Taliban, and threatened after they informed the group that she was not at home.

Aadila\* described the first two weeks of Taliban rule as a time of fear and uncertainty. She had initially decided to stay in Afghanistan and continue her work, until the Taliban came to her home one night asking for her. Upon the insistence of relatives, she left the country shortly afterwards.

Abdul, a male journalist said that editors, journalists and media workers had received instructions from the Taliban that they could work only under the terms of Sharia law and Islamic rules and regulations.

"I have not reported to my job since the fall of the republic. Taliban came to my house several times, but I hid myself. From the time of the collapse, our office is closed" he said.

As a result of a climate of fear bred by the Taliban's takeover, many Afghan women are now wearing the burka, refraining from leaving the house without a male guardian, and stopping other activities to avoid violence and reprisals. Despite the myriad threats now presented to women's rights, women across the country have been holding protests.

While some protests have been allowed to continue peacefully, many were violently repressed by the Taliban. On September 4, approximately 100 women at a protest in Kabul were dispersed by Taliban special forces, who fired into the air and reportedly fired tear gas.

Nazir\*, a human rights defender, told Amnesty International how his male friend Parwiz\* was severely beaten by the Taliban after attending a women's rights protest on September 8.

"Parwiz was detained during women's protests on September 8. He was severely tortured. He had his arm broken. He was taken inside the Police district [district number withheld]. When the Taliban released him, they made him wear new clothes because his clothes had become wet from his blood."

On September 8, the now Taliban controlled Ministry of Interior issued an order banning all demonstrations and gatherings across Afghanistan "until a policy of demonstration is codified."

"The international community must not turn a blind eye to the violations being committed by the Taliban. Taking concrete action at the UN Human Rights Council will not only send the message that impunity will not be tolerated, but also contribute to preventing violations on a broader scale. This should go hand in hand with support for the ongoing investigation at the International Criminal Court, in order to secure accountability for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by all parties," said Juliette Rousselot, FIDH's Program Officer for South Asia.



## AIUSA Group 48

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## Biden Administration Must Hold CBP Officers Accountable and Restore Access to Asylum for All Haitian Migrants

September 24, 2021

In response to the mass deportation of Haitian migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border and horrific reports of Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) inhumane treatment against Black asylum-seekers, Paul O'Brien, Executive Director at Amnesty International USA said:

"The horrific conduct by CBP in Del Rio, Texas, including officers charging into crowds of Haitian asylum-seekers on horseback, violently dispersing them, taunting them, and forcing them away from safety, is reprehensible and underscores a deeper problem of systemic and racist treatment against Haitian and other Black migrants in the U.S. and at the southern border.

"Already, thousands of Haitians have been deported under Title 42, despite Haiti still reeling from sociopolitical instability – including the assassination of its president and increase in gang violence – and natural disasters in the past few months alone. Federal courts have already blocked expulsions of families under Title 42, and human rights, faith, and public health groups have called for an immediate end to the expulsions. These mass deportations demonstrate that the government is not committed to upholding the rights and wellbeing of the asylum-seekers they are sending back to danger.

"Though reports indicate that some Haitian children and families have been allowed to enter the U.S., the mass expulsions continue. Amnesty International USA reiterates its calls on the government to allow access to all asylum-seekers at the U.S. border, regardless of race, ethnicity, age or gender. The U.S. government has a moral and legal responsibility to welcome Haitians and all people who have fled their homes in search of safety, and the Biden Administration can and must do better."

Amnesty International USA is calling on the Biden Administration to:

Stop all deportation flights and expulsions under Title 42 that place Haitian and other Black asylum-seekers in danger if returned to their countries of origin.

Immediately grant humanitarian parole to Haitian and other Black asylum-seekers at the southern border and restore access to asylum for all asylum-seekers – not just families and children – in accordance with international law and regardless of race, ethnicity or nationality.

End the practice of interdictions, which place Haitian and other asylum-seekers at sea at harm if returned to their homes or held in immigration detention.

Launch a swift and full independent investigation into the racist conduct and other abuses by CBP officers against Black asylum-seekers and refugees in Del Rio, TX.

End the use of arbitrary, mass immigration detention, including phasing out Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contracts with private prison companies and county jails; and incorporating a presumption of liberty in all custody decisions such that asylum-seekers and immigrants are allowed to live in the U.S. as they navigate the immigration process, with the support of sponsors and community-based nonprofit programs if they need it.

## Support Political Activist in Grave Health

Name: Victor Yeimo, a pro-independence political activist from Papua

### SAMPLE LETTER

Dear President Joko Widodo,

I am writing to express my grave concern for the life of Victor Yeimo, a pro-independence political activist from Papua. Arrested on May 9, 2021, he has been locked up in Mako Brimob prison in Jayapura for months under deplorable conditions which has ultimately led to his hospitalization.

It is alarming that, throughout Mr. Yeimo's detention,

he has been held in solitary confinement in a cramped and poorly ventilated cell which has further worsened his pre-existing medical condition. With a record of lung and gastric diseases and having recently suffered from hemoptysis (coughing up blood) and heightened risk of COVID-19, we are concerned about his deteriorating health. Though he was recently taken to hospital for a medical check-up, the doctor only gave him medicine while waiting for the tests result. With limited access to his family and lawyer, there are ongoing fears that his health will continue to deteriorate as he does not get the care and treatment he requires.

Mr Yeimo has been accused of violating the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), namely Article 106 on treason, Article 110 of the KUHP on treason with conspiracy in relation to his involvement in protests during the period of heightened tensions in the provinces of Papua and West Papua from August 19 to September 30, 2019. It is deeply distressing that Mr. Yeimo is facing 20 years to life imprisonment for peacefully protesting racial discrimination in Indonesia.

Therefore, I urge you to:

Immediately release Victor Yeimo and drop all charges against him, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;

Pending his release, grant Victor Yeimo prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care on request and as necessary;

Ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that he has regular access to his family and a lawyer of his choice in line with the right to a fair trial.

Sincerely,  
[YOUR NAME]

Max White  
503-292-8168

### Take Action:

Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.

Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 58.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

#### Ir. H. Joko Widodo

President Republic of Indonesia  
State Secretariat  
Jl. Veteran No. 17-18  
Kota Jakarta Pusat, DKI Jakarta  
Indonesia (10110)

#### Chargés d'Affaires Iwan Freddy Hari Susanto

Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia  
2020 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202 775 5200  
Twitter: @IndonesiainDC  
Facebook: @IndonesiainDC  
Salutation: Dear Mr.

**Please take action as-soon-as possible. This Urgent Action expires on October 20, 2021.**

## **Urgent Action: : China**

### **Covid-19 Journalist Hospitalized, Grave Concerns**

**Name and Pronoun: Zhang Zhan (she/her)**

Citizen journalist Zhang Zhan's life is at risk, as her health continues to deteriorate at a dramatic rate. Admitted to hospital due to severe malnutrition on July 31, 2021 she now weighs less than 40 kg and is suffering from swelling in her legs and feet. Allowed to speak to her daughter for the first time since February, Zhang Zhan's mother urged her to reconsider the partial hunger strike. However, Zhang Zhan remains determined to continue the action as a way to assert her innocence and protest her sentence, despite the grave risk to her health. Without access to family and lawyers of her choice, Zhang Zhan remains at risk of further torture and other ill-treatment by the authorities, especially if she continues her hunger strike.

*Dear Director Chen:*

*I am writing to express grave concern for the life of citizen journalist Zhang Zhan, whose health has deteriorated so dramatically over the last months that she has recently required hospitalization. A prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression, Zhang Zhan should not have spent a single day in prison.*

*While I was relieved to hear that Zhang Zhan was able to speak to her mother on August 2, 2021 the first time since early February 2021, it was extremely upsetting to learn about her dire physical condition. According to the authorities, Zhang was admitted to hospital on July 31, 2021 due to severe malnutrition. With Zhang Zhan weighing less than 40 kg and suffering from swollen legs and feet, I am deeply concerned that she may die while in your care.*

*While Zhang is determined to continue her partial hunger strike to assert her innocence and protest her sentencing, it is important that she does not face any further incidents of torture and other ill-treatment as she experienced in Pudong New District Detention Centre. To that end, it is imperative that Zhang has regular access to her family and lawyers of her choice.*

*I therefore urge you to:*

- *Respect Zhang Zhan's right to health, autonomy and expression, and ensure that she has prompt and regular access to medical attention,*
- *Pending her release, ensure that Zhang Zhan has regular, unrestricted access to her family and lawyers of her choice and is not subjected further to torture or other ill-treatment; and*
- *Call for the release of Zhang Zhan immediately and unconditionally, as she has been imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising her human right to freedom of expression.*

*Sincerely,*

#### **Additional information**

Zhang Zhan, a former lawyer, is a citizen journalist who has actively spoken out about politics and human rights issues in China. In February 2020, she travelled to Wuhan, then the centre of the Covid-19 outbreak in

China. She used online platforms (including WeChat, Twitter and YouTube) to report on the detention of other independent reporters as well as the harassment of victims' families. Zhang Zhan went missing on May 14, 2020 in Wuhan and was subsequently revealed to have been detained by police in Shanghai, more than 640 km away.

Zhang Zhan started a hunger strike in June 2020 to protest her detention and assert her innocence. Despite her intention to continue with her protest, detention centre authorities reportedly began forcibly feeding her through a feeding tube, and it is reported that her cell-mates were also involved in the act of forcibly feeding her. Zhang's defence lawyer said she is physically very weak and suffering from stomach pain, dizziness and weakness while walking. It is also reported that Zhang Zhan was forced to wear shackles and that her hands were restrained 24 hours a day for more than three months as punishment for her hunger strike.

The Pudong New District People's Court sentenced



Zhang Zhan to four years in prison on December 28, 2020. The charge against her of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” stemmed from her Covid-19 reports. In April 2021, Zhang Zhan’s family received notification that Zhang was transferred to Shanghai Women’s Prison. Zhang Zhan has continued to carry out a partial hunger strike since being transferred to prison, eating only light snack such as biscuits or man-tou (small, steamed buns).

Zhang Zhan was able to speak to her mother on August 2, 2021 for the first time since February 2021. Zhang’s mother urged Zhang to reconsider the partial hunger strike in the two calls they had. However, despite the grave risk to her health, Zhang Zhan remains determined to continue the action as a way to assert her innocence and protest her sentence. To date, all requests from Zhang’s family to visit her have been refused without any reason being provided.

Citizen journalists were the primary, if not the only, source of uncensored and first-hand information about the Covid-19 outbreak in China. There are not many citizen journalists in China, as they are not able to obtain official accreditation to report news. Citizen journalists in China face consistent harassment and repression for reporting news and disseminating information that is censored by the government.

There have been many reports of independent journalists and activists harassed by authorities for sharing information about Covid-19 on social media. These include outspoken lawyer and citizen journalist Chen Qiushi, who reported being harassed by the authorities after posting footage from hospitals in Wuhan, and Wuhan resident Fang Bin, who was briefly taken away by the authorities after posting a video purporting to show corpses of COVID-19 victims.

The crime of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” under Article 293 of the Chinese Criminal Law is a broadly defined and vaguely worded offence that has been widely used to target activists and human rights defenders. Although the crime originally applied to acts that disrupted order in public places, the scope has expanded since 2013 to include online space as well. Anyone convicted could face a maximum of five years in prison.



### **Take Action:**

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.

1. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 170.20. It’s important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

### **Director Chen Jianhua**

Director of Shanghai Women’s Prison  
No 1601, Zhangjing Road, Sijing Zhen,  
Songjiang Qu, Shanghai 201601  
People’s Republic of China

### **Ambassador Qin Gang**

Embassy of the People’s Republic of China  
3505 International Place NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
Phone: 202 495 2266 / Fax: 202 495 2138  
Email: chinaembpress\_us@mfa.gov.cn  
Twitter: @ChineseEmbinUS ; @AmbQinGang  
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

### **Please take action as soon as possible until October 27, 2021**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

## **Urgent Action: Tunisia Parliamentarian Convicted by Military Court**

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Yassine Ayari (He/him)

Yassine Ayari, an outspoken parliamentarian and whistle-blower who exposed several corruption cases in Tunisia, has been held since July 28, 2021 in the Mornaguia prison to serve a two-month sentence pronounced by a military court in 2018 for his Facebook posts criticizing the army. The military court has initiated new prosecutions against him following his statements calling President Saied's assumption of exceptional powers on July 25, 2021 a "coup".

### **Sample Letter:**

*Dear Your Excellency,*

*I write to you to express my grave concern at the prosecution of Yassine Ayari, a member of parliament, by the Tunis military court, in a breach of the right to freedom of expression and international standards.*

*While in the Mornaguia prison, Yassine Ayari was summoned for interrogation by military prosecutors in a new case against him. According to his lawyer, the military prosecutor opened an investigation into four Facebook posts he published on July 25, 26, 27 and 28, 2021. In his online statements, which Amnesty International reviewed, Yassine Ayari fiercely criticized what he considered an abuse of power by the President, calling the July 25, 2021 decision to suspend the parliament "a military coup with foreign planning and coordination," and using words such as "Pharaoh" and "silly" to characterize the President.*

*Yassine Ayar is being punished for exercising his protected right to free expression. Criticism of the President's seizure of exceptional powers on July 25, 2021, or of the army's move to close the parliament and prevent parliamentarians from entering its premises, or calling this "a coup", are all legitimate political criticism protected by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Tunisia is bound by. Prosecuting Yassine Ayari under article 91 of the Code of Military Justice, which criminalizes defaming the army, violates Tunisia's obligations under international law and is a cynical attempt to silence critics of the President.*

*Yassine Ayari is also facing seven other prosecutions in cases before civilian courts, all stemming from his Facebook posts commenting on corrupt practices, including accusing political parties or their leaders of conflicts of interest and embezzlement - all of which is protected*

*speech and should not warrant criminal prosecution. On September 7, 2021 Yassine Ayari started a hunger strike to protest his unjust imprisonment and his prison conditions. He has denounced the fact that prison authorities have not allowed him to receive letters from his supporters or family.*

*I call on Your Excellency to release Yassine Ayari immediately and to drop the military prosecution against him, which stem from his exercise of his freedom of expression. I also call on the authorities to stop the prosecution of civilians before military courts and to halt the use of defamation laws as a repressive tool against critical voices.*

*Sincerely,*

### **TAKE ACTION:**

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 97.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

### **H.E. Nejmeddine Lakhel**

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20005 Phone: 202 601 4124 I Fax: 202 862 1858  
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Salutation: Your Excellency

**Please take action as soon as possible until:  
November 9, 2021**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.