



September 2022

Our Next Meeting:  
September 8th on Zoom



*“Only when the last prisoner of conscience has been freed, when the last torture chamber has been closed, when the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a reality for the world’s people, will our work be done.”*

**Peter Benenson**  
Amnesty International founder



### **China: Long-delayed UN report must spur accountability for crimes against humanity in Xinjiang**

Responding to the long-awaited release of the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights’ report on serious human rights violations in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Amnesty International’s Secretary General Agnès Callamard said:

“This 46-page document lays bare the scale and severity of the human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang – which Amnesty International previously concluded amounted to crimes against humanity. There can be little doubt why the Chinese government fought so hard to pressure the UN to conceal it.

“The inexcusable delay in releasing this report casts a stain on the OHCHR’s record, but this should not deflect from its significance. It mirrors reporting by Amnesty and other credible organizations documenting patterns of torture or ill-treatment as well as incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. Crucially, it finds that the “extent of arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups ... may constitute ... crimes against humanity.”

“Now that the OHCHR has finally made its findings public, it is time for the UN Human Rights Council to set up an independent international mechanism to investigate these crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations in Xinjiang.

“All member states have a moral obligation to support proposals to discuss the report and establish an investigatory mechanism, or else be left on the wrong side of history. There must be accountability for the Chinese government’s crimes against humanity, including through the identification and eventual prosecution of those individuals suspected of responsibility.

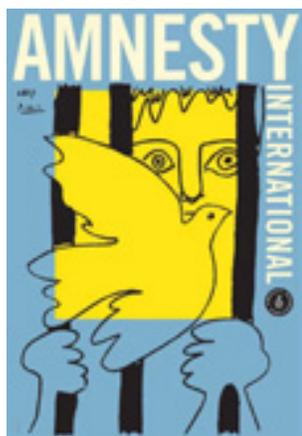
“Beijing’s repeated denial of the human rights crisis in Xinjiang rings ever-more hollow with this further recognition of the evidence of ongoing crimes against humanity and other human rights violation in the region.

Images courtesy Amnesty International or in the public domain unless otherwise indicated.

“The Chinese authorities must immediately release all individuals arbitrarily detained in camps or prisons, end the persecution of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, and immediately allow true unfettered access to independent human rights monitors and investigators.”

The OHCHR’s assessment on Xinjiang was released today, almost a year after High Commissioner Bachelet informed the UN Human Rights Council, in September 2021, that it was being “finalized”.

In May 2022, Bachelet made an official visit to China, including Xinjiang, but she failed to acknowledge serious human rights violations in the country.



Her statement at the end of her trip undermined efforts to advance accountability in the region, instead giving the impression she had walked straight into a highly predictable propaganda exercise for the Chinese government.

She admitted afterwards that she could not speak to any detained Uyghurs or their families while in Xinjiang,

and was accompanied by state officials at all times in the region.

In a draft letter to Bachelet leaked by the media last month, Chinese authorities reportedly urged the High Commissioner “not to publish” her office’s assessment of Xinjiang.

Bachelet’s mandate as High Commissioner ends on 31 August 2022 after she decided not to seek a second term.

Since 2017, there has been extensive documentation of China’s crackdown against Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, carried out under the guise of fighting terrorism. In 2021, a comprehensive report by Amnesty International demonstrated that the systematic state-organized mass imprisonment, torture and persecution perpetrated by Chinese authorities amounted to crimes against humanity.

Amnesty International’s Free Xinjiang Detainees campaign has, to date, profiled 120 individuals who are among the perhaps one million or more people in arbitrary detention in internment camps and prisons in Xinjiang.



## **AIUSA Statement on Six-Month Anniversary of War in Ukraine**

August 24, 2022 The government of Russia must end its war of aggression in Ukraine, which began six months ago today, and the international community must hold those responsible for the Russian military’s war crimes accountable. The scale of devastation caused by this war of aggression thus far demands countries around the world do more to provide humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian people still in country and those seeking refuge abroad.

The war has exacted a staggering toll on Ukraine’s civilian population. Civilians have lost their lives during rocket attacks of preschools, bombardments of bread lines, and missile strikes of hospitals. In cities like Bucha and in other locations across Ukraine, the Russian military has arbitrarily detained, tortured, raped, and executed civilians, demonstrating an egregious disregard for international law. According to the United Nations, over 6.6 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their country and millions more have been displaced. At home, the Russian government has attempted to silence all opposition to the war, arresting, prosecuting, and jailing critics for lengthy terms under new legislative provisions that criminalize peaceful dissent.

As Ukraine marks its Independence Day, many who would ordinarily be celebrating are instead mourning and rebuilding. For many civilians, the day will be marred by the drone of air raid sirens and the fear that their lives are imperiled as they take cover in homes, shelters, and workplaces.

The U.S. government must do all it can to protect civilians during this conflict, compel Russia to end its war of aggression, demand Russia’s accountability for war crimes, and increase humanitarian support to the Ukrainian people.

## AIUSA Group 48

<https://aipdx.org>  
[www.facebook.com/aiusteam48/](https://www.facebook.com/aiusteam48/)  
[amnestygroup48/](https://www.amnestygroup48.org/)

### Group Coordinators

**Marty Fromer  
and Terrie Rodello**

**Treasurer  
Tena Hoke**  
[tena.hoke@gmail.com](mailto:tena.hoke@gmail.com)

**Newsletter  
Daniel Webb**  
[pdx.videozine@gmail.com](mailto:pdx.videozine@gmail.com)

**OR Area Coordinator  
Marty Fromer**  
[martyfromer@gmail.com](mailto:martyfromer@gmail.com)

**Indonesia  
Max White**  
[maxw33@comcast.net](mailto:maxw33@comcast.net)

**Prisoners' Cases  
Jane Kristof**  
[kristofj@pdx.edu](mailto:kristofj@pdx.edu)

**Concert Tabling  
Will Ware**  
[ww\\_ware@yahoo.com](mailto:ww_ware@yahoo.com)

**Central Africa/ OR State  
Death Penalty Abolition  
Terrie Rodello**  
[tarodello@igc.org](mailto:tarodello@igc.org)

[www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)

Postage Rates  
Within the United States  
\$0.58 - Domestic Letter up to 1oz,  
standard envelope size  
\$0.40 - Domestic Postcard  
International Postage  
\$1.30 - Up to 1 oz



### **Action: Justice and Freedoms Under Siege in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

In May 2021, President Felix Tshisekedi invoked a state of siege in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. He said the step was necessary to quickly end armed groups' attacks on civilians and restore peace in the two provinces, which have experienced three decades of violent conflicts. Under this special status, the President transferred powers from civilian courts to military courts. Civilian authorities (including provincial governors) were replaced by military officers, who were given extraordinary powers to conduct a search without judicial warrants and ban any meetings they deem disruptive to the public order, in violation of Congolese and international law.

More than a year later, the state of siege has been unsuccessful. Violence against civilians has not diminished. Peace has not been restored. The military and police have used their broad powers under the State of Siege to limit people's rights to freedom of opinion, expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and how the rights to justice and free and fair trial have been denied. Human rights activists and political leaders were arbitrarily arrested and detained for their criticism or opposition to the State of Siege.

President Tshisekedi has constitutional powers to revoke his decision, granting broad powers to the military in North Kivu and Ituri. By increasing pressure on him, we believe the President could change course and fully reinstate the civilian courts to the role. We believe that targeted pressure on individual cases could cause the release of human rights defenders and investigation into the killings of journalists under the State of Siege since May 2021.

#### **Sample letter.**

*Your Excellency,*

*I am writing to express my concern over the human rights situation in the northeastern regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the many months after you declared the State of Siege, violence against civilians has not decreased. Peace has not returned.*

*Under the State of Siege, the military and police have used their broad powers to limit people's rights to freedom of opinion, expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The rights to justice and free and fair trial have been denied. Human rights activists and political leaders were arbitrarily arrested and detained for their criticism or opposition to the State of Siege.*

*Given your position in your government, you have the power to change this situation by taking the following steps;*

*Immediately revoke all the powers granted to military courts to try civilians under the state of siege.*

*Set out a clear exit plan from the state of siege, which must remain an exceptional and temporary regime that meets the requirements of legality, necessity, and proportionality as set out by international standards in each of its measures.*

*Ensure that any further step to address the armed conflict in eastern DRC is taken and implemented in full accordance with international human rights standards.*

*Regards,*

## **AIUSA Statement on the US Department of Defense Policy on Civilian Harm Prevention and Response**

August 25, 2022 In response to today's announcement from the U.S. Department of Defense on its new policy on civilian harm prevention and response, Daphne Eviatar, Security with Human Rights Director at Amnesty International USA, said:

"Today's announcement marks a promising first step for the Department of Defense to adequately address and prevent future civilian harm caused by U.S. military operations. However, how and when the military implements these new policies will be critical. The U.S. also needs to acknowledge and address the many previous cases of civilian harm that have so far been denied or ignored. Amnesty has extensively reported on the impacts of U.S. military operations on civilians around the world, and will continue to monitor those impacts while we make recommendations to the Department of Defense to help ensure that human rights are not violated in the name of national security."

### **Action Request:**

Email or write a letter to Felix Antoine the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo and copy the Ambassador in Washington DC. In your action, request the President Tshisekedi take the following steps to address the human rights situation resulting from the State of Siege:

- Immediately revoke all the powers granted to military courts to try civilians under the state of siege.
- Set out a clear exit plan from the state of siege, which must remain an exceptional and temporary regime that meets the requirements of legality, necessity, and proportionality as set out by international standards in each of its measures.
- Ensure that any further step to address the armed conflict in eastern DRC is taken and implemented in full accordance with international human rights standards.

Address email letter to:

Felix Antoine Tshisekedi  
President of the Republic  
Email: [communication@presidence.cd](mailto:communication@presidence.cd)  
Salutation: Your Excellency

The Ambassador  
Excellence Marie-Hélène Mathey Boo Lowumba  
1100 Connecticut Ave NW #725  
Washington, DC 20036  
Email: [ambassade@ambardcusa.org](mailto:ambassade@ambardcusa.org)

## Action Request: Equatorial Guinea: 'Cleaning Operation' tramples on human rights, not crime

On 9 May 2022, Vice President Nguema Obiang Mangué said in a video broadcast on national TV that he had launched the operation 'to clean the streets of Equatorial Guinea of criminals and bandits, and to highlight the "right way" to young criminals. This operation has led to the arbitrary and indiscriminate arrests of thousands of young men in the last months. In most cases, the families do not have information on the fate or the whereabouts of their relatives. The operation has proved to be a total assault on human rights.

Amnesty International has asked us to take action on this operation in Equatorial Guinea. It is emphasizing the following points:

- Equatorial Guinea authorities must immediately stop arbitrarily and indiscriminately arresting young men in their fight against gang crime.

- Under the pretext of fighting criminality, young people are being arbitrarily arrested and detained, with many facing torture or other ill-treatment or even losing their lives. This is a targeted and clear assault on human rights.

- It is entirely possible to deal with criminal cases while respecting human rights. Human rights violations are not the solution to fighting gangs' crime.

- In just over three months, thousands of young men have reportedly been arrested across the country. Most of them have been victims of torture or ill-treatment and at least two of them have died in custody. This is affecting many families all over the country.

- In most of the cases of young people arbitrarily arrested by security forces, their whereabouts remain unknown, while their families are often left with little or no news. This lack of information about their fate or whereabouts may turn their deprivation of liberty into enforced disappearances.

- The Equatorial Guinea authorities must urgently offer transparent information on deaths in detention and torture and other ill-treatment and release all those who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained.

Action Request: Email/ Write or Call your Members of Congress to make them aware of the human rights situation in Equatorial Guinea and about the real human rights impact of the "Operacion Limpieza". Please find a sample letter below. Please edit, it so it is in your own words.

To find the website and mailing address of your US Senators to send the action:

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

To find the website and mailing address of your US Representatives to send the action:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

### Sample Letter:

*Dear Senator/Representative*

*I am writing to express my concern about the Equatorial Guinea "Operacion Limpieza". On 9 May 2022, Vice President Nguema Obiang Mangué announced in a national TV broadcast that he had launched the operation 'to clean the streets' of Equatorial Guinea of criminals and bandits, and to highlight the "right way" to young criminals. However, this operation is an assault on human rights. Under the pretense of fighting criminality and gangs, young people are being arbitrarily arrested and detained, with many of them facing torture or other ill-treatment or even losing their lives.*

*In just over three months, thousands of young men have reportedly been arrested across the country. Most of them have been tortured or ill-treated. At least two have died in custody. Families all over the country are affected by this government action.*

*I recognize that crime is an issue that must be addressed, but human rights violations are not the solution to fighting gangs' crime.*

*I urge you to request the Equatorial Guinea government stop arbitrarily and indiscriminately arresting young men in its fight against gang crime immediately. All those who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained must be immediately released.*

*For more information about this campaign, here is Amnesty International's press release: [Equatorial Guinea: 'Cleaning Operation' tramples on human rights, not crime - Amnesty International](#)*

*I look forward to your response to this matter.*

*Regards,*



## Equatorial Guinea: ‘Cleaning Operation’ tramples on human rights, not crime

The Equatorial Guinean authorities must immediately stop arbitrarily and indiscriminately arresting young men in their fight against gang crime, said Amnesty International today after documenting numerous testimonies related to these arrests.

In response to an alleged increase in crime by youth gangs, especially a group known as the “8 Machetes”, Equatorial Guinea’s Vice President, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, launched a national plan to combat these gangs at the beginning of May, which was labelled by the authorities as a “Cleaning Operation”.

On May 9th, 2022, Vice President Nguema Obiang Mangue said in a video broadcast on national TV that he had decided to launch the operation ‘to clean’ the streets of Equatorial Guinea of criminals and bandits, and to highlight the “right way” to young criminals.

The ‘Cleaning Operation’ in Equatorial Guinea is deeply concerning as it leads to egregious violation of human rights. Under the pretext of fighting criminality, young people are being arbitrarily arrested and detained, with many facing torture or other ill-treatment, losing their lives, or being forcibly disappeared.”

Marta Colomer, Amnesty International’s Senior Campaigner for West and Central Africa.

“The Equatorial Guinea authorities must immediately end this campaign, which amounts to little more than a targeted assault on human rights. It is entirely possible to deal with criminal cases while also respecting human rights.”

The government’s plan includes a curfew for young people, as well as sending suspected criminals to high security prisons. In a single week in May, more than 400 young people were arrested, while three months later, thousands of young men were reportedly arrested across the country. Due to a lack of evidence in some cases, some judges decided to grant parole to those arrested. At least two of those arrested, however, died in prison.

Amnesty International spoke with relatives of arrested and detained individuals. In many cases, they said their relatives were mistreated by the security forces during their arrest and detention.

Rubén, a 21-year-old from Campo-Yaunde, was arrested alongside a group of other young people on May 20th while gathering in the Campo-Yaunde area of Malabo, the capital. The group had been described by the authorities as criminals. On June 6th, he died in prison. The family received his body and a medical report, which indicated that Rubén had suffered

from breathing difficulties and anorexia, among other health issues. The family maintains that Rubén had no health problems at the time of his arrest.

An older brother of two arrested boys told Amnesty: “The government is reacting to the actions of a criminal gang that was stealing from people, but they are taking people at random. Some are criminals, but others are just innocent men. They don’t investigate. We are not the only ones affected. Many families are also affected all over the country.”

For many other young people arbitrarily arrested by security forces, their whereabouts remains unknown, while their families are often left with little or no news.

Lucas, a 24-year-old, was arrested by the Rapid Intervention Force on May 8th while spending time with his girlfriend and other friends. They were taken to the Central Police Station in Malabo. When Lucas’ girlfriend, Anita, tried to visit him, the police said her boyfriend “is a gangster, and we are going to put him in jail”.

The family heard from informal sources that Lucas is reportedly being held in Black Beach, a high security prison in Malabo, yet nobody could confirm this information. The lack of official information on his fate or whereabouts may turn his deprivation of liberty into an enforced disappearance – a crime under international law.

Anita told Amnesty International: “The only thing they are saying is that none of those arrested are innocent. If at some point it is proven that they are innocent, then they will be released. What happened to Lucas is happening all over the country. It’s not just here in Malabo.”

Santiago, a 22-year-old student arrested in the municipality of Bata three months ago, is still being arbitrarily detained by the police. Although the police told his family there was no proof of Santiago’s criminality, they demanded a payment of 100.000 CFA (around US\$150) for his release. As the family were unable to pay, Santiago remains in detention in an unknown location.

“It’s not just my story. All the police stations are overcrowded with young boys who have been arrested. The other day, when I went there, there were at least more than 400 boys,” said Santiago’s father.

According to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, to which Equatorial Guinea is a party, arrested and detained persons have the right to contact and access a family member or other person

of their choice. A few days before the launch of the “Cleaning Operation”, the President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo told the people of Equatorial Guinea that the plan does not undermine human rights, and that international human rights organizations who criticize it are trying to destabilize the country.

The Equatorial Guinean authorities must urgently offer transparent information on deaths in detention and torture and other ill-treatment. They must also ensure those suspected of criminality face justice in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts and release all those who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained.”

### **Russian Sham Trials of Ukrainian Prisoners of War in Mariupol “Illegal and Unacceptable”**

August 26, 2022 Any moves by Russian-backed armed groups to try Ukrainian prisoners of war in a so-called ‘international tribunal’ in Mariupol are illegal and abusive, and a further act of cruelty against a city that has already suffered extensively under Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, Amnesty International said today.

In recent days, concerns have mounted after several reports and pictures shared on social media appear to show cages being built inside the Mariupol Philharmonic Hall to allegedly restrain prisoners who will be put on trial. Amnesty International’s Crisis Evidence Lab confirmed that pictures posted on Facebook by Mariupol City Council were consistent with the interior of the Mariupol Philharmonic Hall.

International law prohibits a detaining power from prosecuting prisoners of war for having participated in hostilities, or for lawful acts of war committed in the course of armed conflict. Under the Third Geneva Convention, prisoners of war charged with crimes are entitled to due process and a fair trial, which can only take place in a regularly constituted court.

“Any attempts by Russian authorities to try Ukrainian prisoners of war in so-called ‘international tribunals’ set up by armed groups under Russia’s effective control in Mariupol are illegal and unacceptable,” said Marie Struthers, Amnesty International’s Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

“International humanitarian law prohibits courts being set up solely to try prisoners of war. Willfully stripping fair trial rights from prisoners of war, which

is precisely what Russia's action will do, amounts to a war crime. The Geneva Conventions also state clearly that prisoners of war are protected from prosecution for taking part in hostilities.

“By staging such sham ‘trials,’ Russia – as the occupying power – is making a mockery of justice and a public theatre of courts, transforming them into vehicles for propaganda.

“To choose Mariupol as host of these ‘tribunals’ is particularly cruel and shocking, given Russia's recent relentless attacks and siege which turned the city into a wasteland before its capture in May. Amnesty International investigated a Russian air strike on the Donetsk Regional Academic Drama Theatre in Mariupol and concluded that Russian forces had deliberately targeted civilians, an attack amounting to a clear war crime.”

Russian forces and Russian-backed armed groups must give independent monitors full access to Ukrainian prisoners of war. Amnesty International shares concerns raised by the UN's human rights agency (OHCHR) that Ukrainian prisoners of war have been held without access to independent monitors, “exposing them to the risk of being tortured to extract a confession.”

Amnesty International also shares OHCHR's concern that public statements by Russian officials deeming Ukrainian prisoners of war to be ‘war criminals’ directly undermines the presumption of innocence, a fundamental fair trial guarantee.

In recent years, Amnesty International has consistently documented the violation of the right to a fair trial in Russia, including endemic use of torture, fabrication of evidence, and politically-motivated prosecutions. These concerns are substantially increased when it comes to ‘trials’ by armed groups in Russian-occupied territories.

Amnesty International has also previously documented numerous human rights abuses by such groups since they took control over parts of eastern Ukraine under Russian patronage, including abductions, killings, unlawful deprivation of liberty, torture and other ill-treatment, and suppression of dissent.

Amnesty International is also calling for an imme-

diate international investigation into other alleged war crimes, including the July 29 explosion in Olenivka village that killed more than 50 Ukrainian prisoners of war held by forces of the so-called ‘Donetsk People's Republic’ in eastern Ukraine. It is imperative that Russian authorities allow international investigators to visit the site to launch a comprehensive probe.

Protections for prisoners of war facing criminal proceedings are contained in Articles 82 to 108 of the Third Geneva Convention (GCIII). As Article 84 provides, they may only be tried by courts that offer “the essential guarantees of independence and impartiality as generally recognized.”

In addition, Article 13 of GCIII states: “Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention. Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity.”

Since the beginning of the conflict, Amnesty International has been documenting Russian war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law committed during Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. All of Amnesty International's outputs published to date – including news updates, reports, briefings and investigations – can be found here.

Amnesty International has called repeatedly for Russian forces responsible for violations to be held to account and has welcomed the ongoing International Criminal Court investigation in Ukraine. Comprehensive accountability in Ukraine will require the concerted efforts of the UN and its organs, as well as initiatives at the national level pursuant to the principle of universal jurisdiction.

