

# Amnesty International UK NAMCAR Newsletter Feb 2021



## North America and the Caribbean Canada, USA, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic and English Speaking Caribbean

Hello All

It's been quite a year...

As the COVID-19 pandemic tears across the world we are all worried about the future. In countries where the virus has hit many have already lost loved ones. Elsewhere people are bracing themselves for the spread of the virus, wondering how stretched healthcare systems can possibly cope. Even for those who haven't yet been directly affected, COVID-19 is disrupting lives in unimaginable ways.

Whether you are working from home, out of work, self-isolating or caring for others, these are lonely and uncertain times. Life may feel like it's on hold right now - but the fight for human rights never stops.

With great regret, I have to resign from my role as Country Coordinator effective from the end of January. Family, outside work commitments and the impact of the pandemic have proved too much. I will, of course, continue to take action and campaign alongside you all. It has been an honour working alongside such dedicated and able campaigners as Sue and Lise. If you are interested in applying deadline is 31st Jan <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/jobs/country-coordinator-caribbean-states-excluding-cuba>



Keep Fighting

Angus

## The Year 2020 for North America

**COVID-19** has been dominating the year with its consequence in terms of Human Rights. The pandemic has laid bare systemic disparities that have long undermined our human rights, including those to life and health, to work, to social security, and to be free from discrimination. The situation in the US for immigrants and for prisoners has been particularly worrying.

Among the more positive outcomes of Amnesty's involvement in 2020 we can find:

**Kelly Gonzalez Aguilar** has been freed from US immigration detention after 2 years and 11 months.

After she attempted suicide, in March 2020, a federal judge ordered that **Chelsea Manning** be released from jail in Virginia. She had been in jail since May 2019.

We managed to live-stream a discussion in cooperation with Amnesty Norway with former detainee from **Guantánamo - Mohamedou Slahi**.

Amnesty International joined **The BlackLivesMatter** movement to ask for justice for George Floyd and ask for a police reform free of discrimination and brutality. More than a million signatures were gathered and will be presented to the new presidential administration.

We stopped the deportation of **Pastor Steven Tendo** back to Uganda where he would likely be killed by security agencies.

**Julian Assange:** A petition to protect the right to freedom of expression was issued to urge the US authorities to drop the charges against Julian Assange that stem solely from his publishing activities with Wikileaks.

## Presidential Elections 2020

The US presidential election took place on 3 November 2020, with Joe Biden winning the election. Trump and a number of Republicans continue to challenge the election results and have not conceded that Joe Biden has won the election. As you know, Amnesty International does not comment on such issues. Our concern is that we may yet see widespread protests and violence. We are prepared for any emergency scenarios related to Trump, and in the meantime, are moving forward with our human rights priorities for Joe Biden.



Statement issued by Amnesty USA after the events on 6 January 2021: In his speech subsequent audio recording and tweets, President Trump continued to reject the U.S. election results and incite his supporters —leading thousands to storm and breach the U.S. Capitol. In response, Amnesty International USA Interim Executive Director Bob Goodfellow issued the below statement: [AI USA response](#).

Press Release from AI UK issued on 7 January 2021: “Moment of reckoning as President Trump incites violence at the Capital”:([Press release](#)).

The U.S. government’s response to the pandemic has laid bare systemic disparities that have long undermined our human rights, including those to life and health, to work, to social security, and to be free from discrimination. President Trump’s rejection of the results of the 2020 election and refusal to cooperate with President-Elect Biden’s team will effectively cost even more lives and worsen this human rights crisis. Respect for human rights must not be a casualty of the current political situation. We call on President Trump and his administration to fulfil their human rights obligations under international law and cooperate with President-Elect Biden to protect the rights to health and to life.

## 28 Children at Risk of Imminent Deportation



Please find attached the Fifth UA 116/20 regarding the urgent situation of 28 children and their families, held indefinitely in immigration detention. None of these families have been allowed to request asylum in accordance with US and international law, and they would be sent back to danger if they are returned to their countries of origin. Please help us call upon authorities to stop deportations and ensure these families their right to seek asylum.

Please take action by following the link below:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/3414/2020/en/>

## Death Penalty

### Federal Executions



**Alfred Bourgeois** (pictured on the left), was executed on 11 December 2020.

Three more federal executions were set to take place since our last newsletter and three more in 2021.

**Orlando Hall** was executed on Thursday **19 November**, after the US Supreme Court lifted a temporary stay of execution put in place by a federal court earlier in the day.

## Death Penalty

I am sad to say that after a flurry of last-minute court orders, hours of uncertainty and one final plea to reconsider her competency, **Lisa Montgomery** became the first woman executed by the federal government in 67 years early Wednesday. **Corey Johnson** was executed on 14 January and **Dustin Higgs** was executed on the 16, becoming the 13<sup>th</sup> and final federal prisoner executed under Trump. Their legal representatives have highlighted that flaws and arbitrariness that have long affected the use of the death penalty in the USA also affect their cases.

Thank you to all those who wrote to the United States of America's Attorney General demanding the immediate halt of the federal executions set to take place in the last weeks of Trump's presidency.

Joe Biden, who has said he will prohibit further federal executions, will likely reverse the Trump administration's rule.

Here are some facts about those on federal death row:

- 54. — Number of people currently on federal death row
- 13 — Number executed 2020-2021
- 3 — Number of people executed, 2000-2019

## Black Lives Matter

More than a million signatures were collected to ask for police reform. They will be delivered in January 2021 to Joe Biden's administration when he takes up office.

**Please write** to the US Ambassador in London asking for such reform.

Mr Robert Wood Johnson

Ambassador of the United States of America to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

33 Nine Elms Lane

Nine Elms

London SW11 7US



## Pastor Steven Tendo

Steven Tendo is a 35-year-old pastor and asylum-seeker who fled from torture and other severe human rights violations in Uganda and requested asylum in the USA. Since December 2018 he has been detained at an immigration detention facility in Los Fresnos, Texas.

We managed to stop his deportation back to Uganda and now more actions to release Pastor Steven from detention:



### Please send emails and/or letters to:

ICE San Antonio Deputy Field Office Director Deborah Achim

Email: [Deborah.Achim@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:Deborah.Achim@ice.dhs.gov)

cc [SanAntonio.Outreach@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SanAntonio.Outreach@ice.dhs.gov)

Address: 1777 NE Loop 410 Floor 15, San Antonio, TX, 78217, USA

Here is a sample letter, or use your own words.

Dear Deputy FOD Achim,

I am deeply concerned about the safety of Steven Tendo (A# 201 520 012), an ordained minister, asylum-seeker, and human rights activist who was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after fleeing from danger in Uganda.

The U.S. government is under the obligation not to return individuals to a situation in which they would be at risk of torture or other serious human rights abuses. An official from Uganda had submitted a declaration confirming that Pastor Steven was tortured by Ugandan government forces and will likely be killed by security agencies if returned to Uganda. We are grateful that Pastor Steven's removal has been halted pending adjudication of his petition for federal review before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

**Send solidarity letters/cards to Pastor Steven** while he is in detention! Here is his mailing address: Pastor Steven Tendo, A.201-520-012, Port Isabel Service Processing Center, ICE 27991 Buena Vista Blvd, Los Fresnos, Texas 78566, USA



# USA

## Guantánamo



The 11th January 2021 marked the 19th Anniversary of Guantánamo Bay detention centre. 40 Muslim men remain locked up. With the incoming Biden administration in the USA, we have an opportunity to finally get the facility closed.

An updated report entitled “USA: Right the Wrong – Decision Time on Guantánamo” was issued on the day of the anniversary. Here is the link: ([USA: Right the Wrong. Decision Time on Guantánamo](#)).

**ACTION:** Please share it as much as possible. If you can, use your local press.

Please also put on your radar that [a Hollywood production](#) about Guantanamo and former detainee Mohamedou Slahi is slated for release on 19 February 2021, and Amnesty is exploring partnership with the movie producers. You can watch the trailer for *The Mauritanian* [here](#).

Please promote the new petition targeting President Joe Biden and send me all the petitions you have gathered by the end of February 2021. My address is: Lise Rossi, 79 Whistler Street, London E5 1NJ. I will forward them to Amnesty USA who will deliver them to the Biden Administration a couple of months after he is sworn in on 20 January 2021.

Here is the text of the petition:

“Subject: Close Guantánamo

Dear President Joe Biden,

The US government’s use of indefinite detention without charge as a response to 9/11 has been unlawful from the outset. This detention regime must be brought to an end, and any proposal for its continuation or expansion rejected. The detention facility at Guantánamo must be shut down immediately.

# USA & Canada

I urge you to work toward a lawful solution for the detainees still held at Guantánamo by either transferring them for release, or bringing individuals to trial in civilian federal courts if this can be achieved in accordance with international law and standards and without recourse to the death-penalty. Those detainees already cleared for transfer should be transferred immediately to countries that will respect their human rights. Those who were subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment must receive genuine access to rehabilitation and redress. The individuals responsible for torture and enforced disappearance must be brought to justice in a fair trial without recourse to the death penalty. The ongoing operations in the Guantánamo Bay detention facility are a human rights abomination.

I urge you to close the prison immediately.”

## Ongoing Actions from Last Newsletter.

### VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Years of campaigning led by Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people resulted in government finally calling an inquiry to investigate the scope and scale of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit persons, and to identify solutions to end the violence. In June 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls issued its final report, including 231 Calls for Justice. **The federal government committed to creating a National Action Plan by June 2020** to

transform the Calls for Justice into concrete actions, but has delayed creation of the plan, and a timeline and process to create it remains unknown.

Normally on October 4th, hundreds of Sisters in Spirit vigils are held in communities across Canada to honour Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people who have gone missing or been murdered, and every year many Amnesty members participate in these vigils. Last year, October 4th was a bit different because of the pandemic.

### TAKE ACTION

It is not too late to [Write a letter](#) to Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett, calling on her to create a National Action Plan to end violence against First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and two-spirit persons now!

### POLICE VIOLENCE

The BlackLivesMatter protest also concerns Canada. Communities have been speaking out for decades about how black people experience policing in Canada.

### TAKE ACTION

Please follow the link to take Action: [AI Canada's latest ABR action targeting Premiers.](#)

Excerpt from the action: *These are not the only interactions in recent months that have resulted in deaths, and they are not isolated incidents. In 2020, The Ontario Human Rights Commission interim report on anti-Black racism in policing stated that Black people in Toronto are up to 20 times more likely to be shot dead by police than white people. According to a Vancouver Police Board Study, Indigenous and Black people are significantly over-represented in street checks conducted by the Vancouver Police Department. In 2017, 16% of all street checks were of Indigenous people, despite making up 2% of Vancouver's population. Black people accounted for 4% of street checks despite making up 1% of the population.*



## ASYLUM SEEKERS AND COVID 19



On 26 June 2020, a federal judge in the USA ordered immigration authorities to release all children from family immigration detention facilities, which the judge declared were “on fire” with COVID-19. Authorities must comply but release all families together to protect them from the pandemic while maintaining their family unity. The alternative – releasing the children but continuing to detain their parents- would constitute family separation, a practice that in some cases can constitute torture under US and international law. An Amnesty action was issued to demand authorities to release all families

together. The judge-imposed deadline for authorities to act was 27 July 2020. Nothing has been done so far.

North America Researcher Brian Griffey has published an update as a follow-up to the report [We Are Adrift, About to Sink](#). As of 28 August 2020 – over four months since the initial Amnesty International report (Adrift About to Sink) – the number of people who have contracted confirmed cases of COVID-19 in US immigration detention facilities has skyrocketed more than 200-fold, to 5,300 cases (850 of whom remain in detention, and have not been deported). Among those cases are some of the approximately one hundred families held in detention centres, which a US federal judge has said were “on fire” with confirmed cases of COVID-19 due to inadequate protection. The campaign update is online in English on the Amnesty website [here](#) .

## KELLY GONZALEZ AGUILA



Kelly, a 23-year-old transgender woman, fled Honduras when he was 12 years old because of violence against her based on her transgender identity. She has been locked up since while she awaits the results of her asylum claim. We issued an Urgent Action in early May and the good news is that Kelly has been freed from US immigration after 2 years and 11 months! Here she is pictured, right after her release, outside the detention centre in Colorado where activists had set up a protest encampment for the last month to demand authorities release people from detention during COVID-19.

Her lawyer said her release is the result of the campaign. There was no other reason (for example, there was no court order that made authorities act).

## SOLIDARITY ACTION

Please cease all appeals to authorities, but feel free to send support letters to Kelly at the home of her sponsors!

Kelly Gonzalez Aguilar, 5721 Genoa St., Oakland, CA, 94608 USA

## CHELSEA MANNING UPDATE

After she attempted suicide, in March, a federal judge ordered that Chelsea Manning be released from jail in Virginia. Ms Manning had been in jail since May 2019 for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating WikiLeaks.

Solidarity letters can be sent to:  
Chelsea Manning c/o Queerious Labs  
3542 Fruitvale Ave, #124  
Oakland, CA 94602  
USA

**LEONARD PELTIER** (who features in the recent video put together showing the work of the NAMCAR Team)

Amnesty International has long called for clemency and release for Native American activist Leonard Peltier, due to fair trial concerns, the exhaustion of his appeals and his having served more than 40 years in prison, some of which was spent in solitary confinement, for a crime he has always claimed he did not commit. The threat of COVID-19 underscores the urgency of this call, as Peltier is 75 years old and has serious health concerns. He suffers from diabetes, among a myriad of other health issues, and in January 2016 was diagnosed with an abdominal aortic aneurysm, which can be fatal if it ruptures.

## TAKE ACTION

Please urge President Biden to grant clemency to Leonard Peltier and release him. You can email or write a letter.



President Joe Biden  
The White House  
Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
Twitter: @realDonaldTrump  
Instagram: realdonaldtrump  
Email: via <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Contact the Federal Bureau of Prisons and urge them to transfer Leonard Peltier to a facility closer to his family.

Link to Urgent Action:

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/uaa01619-1.pdf>

## SOLIDARITY

Please keep showing your support to him and send solidarity cards to:

Leonard Peltier, #89637-132  
USP Coleman 1  
US Penitentiary  
PO Box 1033  
Coleman, FL 33521  
USA

# Caribbean States Cuba

## Review of 2020:

State-sponsored censorship and control over all aspects of freedom of expression continued to be major concerns and the focus of Amnesty's attention in Cuba. Amnesty local groups and activists across the UK took action on these issues throughout the year, mainly by email and on social media, given that post to Cuba has been halted by the pandemic.

## News of Prisoners:

**José Daniel Ferrer García:** after being detained in October 2019, Cuba's main opposition leader was sentenced to four and a half years of house arrest.

Of the six prisoners of conscience announced by Amnesty in 2019, two were released:

**Roberto de Jesús Quiñones Haces**, after serving his one-year sentence, and **Silverio Portal Contreras**, after serving half of his four-year sentence.

**Reports:** **Freedom House** published two reports: **FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2020**, concluding that Cuba is "Not Free", with an overall score of 14 out of 100 on analysis of political & civil rights, and **FREEDOM ON THE NET 2020**, where Cuba scored 22 out of 100.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/cuba/freedom-world/2020> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cuba/freedom-net/2020>

A report by **Human Rights Watch** in July stated that since March, Cuba had sent roughly 1,500 medical professionals across the world to help fight the Covid-19 pandemic, joining approximately 30,000 Cuban health workers already deployed abroad, and that the Cuban government imposes draconian rules on doctors deployed in medical missions globally that violate their fundamental rights.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/23/cuba-repressive-rules-doctors-working-abroad#>

In October, Cuba was elected to a fifth term on the **United Nations Human Rights Council**, despite concerns about Cuba's human rights record expressed by 85 civil society organisations. <https://freedomhouse.org/article/deep-concern-cuba-reelected-un-human-rights-council>

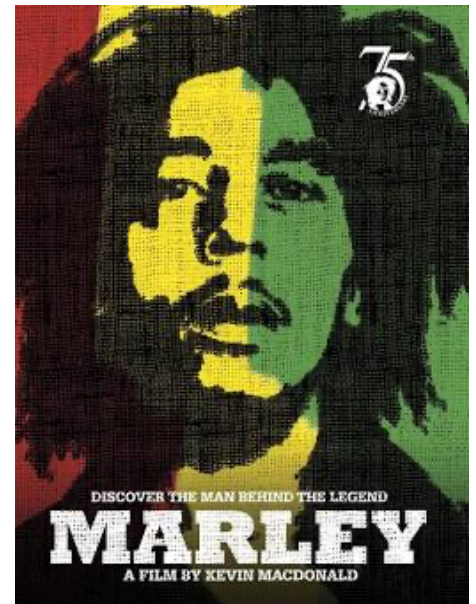
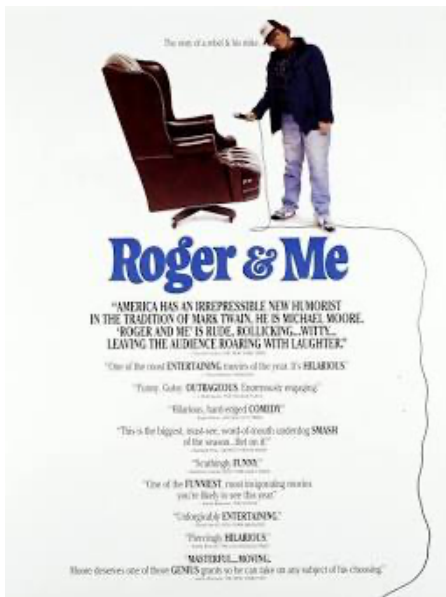
The end of the year was dominated by news of the restrictions on the **San Isidro Movement**, a group created in 2018 in Havana to protest against the possible curbs on artistic expression in Decree 349. The group has been calling for the release of the rapper, **Denis Solís González**, who is serving an 8-month sentence for "contempt" after an argument with a police officer who entered his house without authorisation.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/cuba-san-isidro-movement-allies-under-frightening-levels-surveillance/>

**In 2021 our activism in the UK will continue to be guided by the International Secretariat Caribbean team based in Mexico City, which is now drawing up priorities and plans for the year ahead.**

# Books & Films recommended by your CCs

## FILMS



## BOOKS

