

Amnesty International UK

NAMCAR Newsletter April 2021



North America and the Caribbean

Canada, USA, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic and English Speaking Caribbean

Hello All,

We hope this finds you well. Our team is down to two at the moment, as we are recruiting for the post of Country Coordinator for the **Caribbean excluding Cuba** (Haiti, Dominican Republic and English Speaking Caribbean).

On 25th March 2021 Amnesty International launched a new report:

Vaccines in the Americas. Ten Human Rights Musts to Ensure Health for All.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR0137972021ENGLISH.PDF>

Through the report, Amnesty is calling on States to comply with international human rights standards that will allow vaccinations to be available to the entire population and produce a successful outcome.

Very Best Wishes

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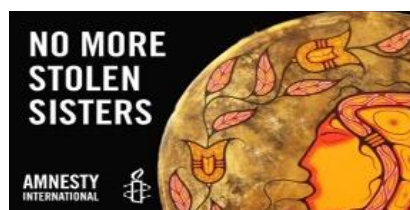
Regional Team Coordinator, Namcar

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CANADA

Violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples (Ongoing Action)



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.

ACTION REQUEST

Please **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.

USA

New Administration: Executive Orders



Photo: Alex Wong/Gerry Images



Photo: Saul Loeb/Pool Photo via Associated Press

Amnesty is non-partisan but the election of Joe Biden marks a tremendous departure from the very difficult 4 years we've experienced, both domestically and globally, with human rights violations abounding courtesy of the cruel and reckless Trump administration. This marks a new era of leadership in the US, and while we expect positive actions from the new administration to undo some of Trump's ugliest policies, we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

So far so good: Joe Biden is busy issuing Executive Orders which include halting the funding for the construction of Trump's border wall, reversing the so-called "Muslim Ban", launching a federal initiative of advanced racial equity nationwide, introducing an Immigration Bill and reversing the ban on transgender Americans joining the military. The Trump Administration's previous orders on those subjects had been contested by Amnesty International. Joe Biden has also announced that he does not support federal executions. Click for the list of **50 Executive Orders** he has issued so far.

Why Executive Orders?

Presidential executive orders, once issued, remain in force until they are cancelled, revoked, adjudicated unlawful, or expire on their terms. At any time, the president may revoke, modify, or make exceptions from any executive order, whether the order was made by the current president or a predecessor. Typically, a new president reviews in-force executive orders in the first few weeks in office. They are fast-working as they do not require the approval of Congress and do not become a law as such.

Freeing People from immigration detention



Over one hundred leading US immigration, civil rights, and human rights organizations called on the Department of Homeland Security to immediately halt the deportations of asylum-seeking parents and their children from the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas. You can read AIUSA's **media release** here. This is Amnesty USA's top priority for the first quarter of 2021.

ACTION REQUEST

Online action – Just follow the link: **immigration action** which works outside of the US.

Tweet @POTUS and @JoeBiden to free people from immigration detention including all families.

Write to raise the issue with the US ambassador in London:

Her Excellency Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. Embassy London, 33 Nine Elms Lane, London SW11 7US.

Death Penalty and Justice

Two Happy-Very-Sad stories:

Philadelphia Boxer Sent to Death Row by Unrebutted False Medical Testimony Released after 28 years (Death Penalty Information Center) ([DPIC link](#))

'An Awful Mistake' Might Soon Be Fixed — Finally
Benjamin Spencer is the luckiest of the unlucky (Article in the Atlantic)



Benjamin Spencer at the H. H. Coffield Unit (Photo: Nathan Bajar)

Pastor Steven Tendo



Pastor Steven Tendo was held in immigration detention in the USA for over two years until global campaigning secured his release in February 2021. His case file will be closed in two weeks. Thanks to all who campaigned for him.

Guantánamo Detention Centre



On the 19th anniversary of the Detention Centre, Amnesty issued this report:
USA: Right the Wrong, Decision Time on Guantánamo.

ACTION REQUEST

Please **share the report** as widely as possible. If you can, use your local press.

Please **keep writing** to Joe Biden. There is now a petition online. Here's the link:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/close-guantanamo/>

FILM: *The Mauritanian*

A Hollywood production about Guantánamo and Mohamedou Ould Salahi was released in the US on 19 February 2021. Amnesty International is endorsing the movie and partnering with the production team for a joint launch. You can watch the trailer here: "**The Mauritanian**".

The film is released in the UK on 1st April. We are planning to use it as a tool to propel our work to close Guantánamo this year, which we feel hopeful about in the new Biden administration.

The film is based on the extraordinary story of Salahi being held for fourteen years without charge in Guantánamo and his memoir, *Guantánamo Diary*. Jodie Foster, who acts as Salahi's lawyer in the film, won Best Supporting Actress at the Golden Globe Awards.

Thank you to the **Lewes Amnesty Group** which has been very active regarding the closure of the Guantánamo Detention Centre.

Kelly Gonzalez Aguilar was freed from US immigration detention after 2 years and 11 months. Kelly, a 23-year-old transgender woman, fled Honduras at 12 years old.

SOLIDARITY ACTION REQUEST (Ongoing Action)

Please cease all appeals to authorities, but feel free to continue sending 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, 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 ACTION REQUEST (Ongoing Action)

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

Leonard Peltier



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 were 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.

ACTION REQUEST (Ongoing Action)

Please continue to 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
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Email: www.whitehouse.gov/contact
Phone: (202) 456-1111
Twitter: @POTUS and @JoeBiden
Instagram: @POTUS and @joebiden
Facebook: @POTUS and @joebiden

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 and **send solidarity cards** to:

Leonard Peltier, #89637-132

USP Coleman 1

US Penitentiary

PO Box 1033

Coleman, FL 33521

USA

CUBA

News and actions from Amnesty on the Caribbean countries continue to be at a reduced level as the IS Caribbean team take the lead on Covid 19 in the Americas.

A new Cuba campaign is due to be launched soon.

Restrictions continue 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 authorization.

Following the release of the song, *Patria y Vida (Homeland and Life)*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pP9Bto5IOEQ> (in Spanish with English subtitles)

which is critical of the harassment of artists by the authorities, the **European Parliament** hosted this live webinar on 1st March called *Patria y Vida, arte y política unidos por Cuba (Homeland and Life, art and politics united for Cuba)*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nazb7PqdDe4> (in Spanish with English subtitles).

The Cuban authorities responded by producing their own song, *Patria o Muerte por la Vida*

(*Homeland or Death for Life*): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu4Huw3i-IE> (in Spanish).

It criticises the creators of *Patria y Vida* who they say have an obsession with money, and says that the Revolution will last another 62,000 millenia.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Urgent Action: Critical chance to decriminalize abortion

The Dominican Republic's current legislation outlaws abortion under all circumstances and causes a serious and urgent public health problem, leading to avoidable deaths of women generally from the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

From 24 March members of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic's Congress will begin to discuss a reform of the country's criminal code, including the possibility of decriminalizing abortion in three circumstances. We demand the Congress approves these reforms to meet their human rights obligations to respect, protect and fulfil women's and girls' rights, lives, health, dignity, and autonomy.

ACTION REQUEST

Please write to the President of the Chamber of Deputies by 24th May 2021. Details here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr27/3889/2021/en/>