**NAMCAR (North America and the Caribbean)**

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

**Amnesty International reminds Donald Trump and all elected officials across the country today of their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights in their policies and approaches, here at home and around the world. Amnesty International has documented extensively the damage to human rights caused by President Trump’s first administration, including its efforts to redefine human rights, and stands ready to defend human rights in his second Presidential term.**

This Newsletter is different from the previous Newsletters as I will concentrate on the actions Joe Biden took before leaving office and those which Donald Trump has taken since he has become president. I will return to the usual layout thereafter. Please keep taking action for the Wet’suwet’en Indigenous Land Defenders in Canada.

Thanks a million.

Lise

AIUK Country Coordinator, Caribbean States excluding Cuba: vacant

AIUK Country Coordinator, Cuba: vacant

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*\* Some of the actions are genuinely ongoing so there is some repetition in the Newsletter. But please keep writing. It also provides a background for new Amnesty Members*

# Cuba

# Cuban Authorities release 553 prisoners

Before leaving office, Joe Biden removed Cuba from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, as part of a deal to free protesters jailed during the sweeping 2021 crackdown on dissent in Cuba. In all 553 prisoners were released (progressively). All the beneficiaries were given conditional release from prison (“good” behaviour), instead of being pardoned, which means that the sentence is not extinguished. The Obama administration had removed the terrorism designation for Cuba in an effort to normalise relations, but Donald Trump placed it back on the list when he left office in 2021.

An Urgent Action was issued by Amnesty for Pedro Albert Sánchez (see my December Newsletter), a 68-year-old teacher and human rights defender, arbitrarily detained since November 22, 2013. He received a five-year sentence for contempt and public disorder after participating in the July 2021 protests. Since the end of 2024 he had a license to serve his sentence at home because of his ill health. On 18 January he was granted parole.

José Daniel Ferrer and Donaida Pérez were also released from prison. Also, the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights (OCDH) reported that Félix Navarro has left the Afgüica prison and is now free. Brenda Díaz, the trans protester sentenced to 14 years in prison for participating in the same July 2021 protests was also released.

Here is the full list of prisoners released: <https://observacuba.org/ocdh-maxima-preocupacion-cancelacion-pausa-ralentizacion-excarcelaciones-presos-politicos-cuba/>

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**USA**

**Joe Biden leaving Office**

**A reminder of Amnesty’s Demands to Joe Biden before he leaves offices and what was achieved:**

1. Address his promise to abolish the federal death penalty: He must commute the death sentences of Billie Allen and all other people on federal and military death row.

*Biden also commuted the sentences for 37 out of 40 federal inmates on death row, converting them to life in prison without parole. This included Billie Allen’s case which Amnesty has been campaigning for.*

*Joe Biden commuted the sentences of nearly 2500 people convicted of non-violent drug offences. He said in a statement that those benefiting from this action were serving disproportionately long sentences they would receive today under current law, policy and practice.*

*He also pardoned 39 people convicted of non-violent crimes, and commuted the sentences of nearly 1500 others who were serving long prison terms.*

Joe Biden’s commutation of the sentences of most of the men on federal death row is a significant step towards meeting his campaign pledge. However three men remain on federal death row with four additional men remaining on military death row. (Just a reminder that Donald Trump, during the first three months of his first presidency, ordered 13 federal executions)

1. Change course on border policy: He must rescind the asylum ban and border shutdown and restore access to asylum at the border.

*The Biden administration had allowed migrants to use an app to make an appointment for admission into the United States. No change of position at the end of presidency.*

1. Change course on Gaza: He should stop all arms transfers to the government of Israel in order to protect civilians and ensure U.S. weapons are not being used in violation of international law. He should also use all leverage to ensure an immediate and permanent ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access, and the safe return of the remaining hostages.

*No change of position before leaving office.*

1. Rectify a case of injustice: He should grant clemency and free Indigenous elder and activist Leonard Peltier.

*In his final hour, now-former President Biden commuted the sentence of Native American activist Leonard Peltier. He was able to return home for the first time in 50 years to carry out the rest of his prison sentence from there, instead of behind bars. This has been a tremendous campaign effort for many decades by Amnesty members worldwide alongside Native American organizations. We will issue a Urgent Action Outcome and hopefully obtain quotes and/or photos of him in the coming weeks/months.*

1. Make history: Close Guantanamo and transfer the remaining detainees to countries where their human rights will be respected.

*President Biden freed four men: Mohammed Farik bin Amin, Mohammed Nazim bin Lep, Abdelmalik Bajabu and Riadh Bin Saleh al-Yazidi.*

*Furthermore, President Biden transferred 11 Yemeni prisoners from Guantánamo to a detention facility in Oman. They are: Moath Al-Alwi, Khaled Qassim, Tawfiq Al-Bihani, Hani Saleh Rashid Abdullah, Uthman Abd Al-Rahim Muhammad Uthman, Sharqawi Al-Hajj, Abdulsalam Al-Hela, Sanad Al-Kazimi, Suhayl Al-Sharabi, Zakaria Al-Baidany and Hassan Bin Attash*

There are still 15 prisoners (3 of them are approved for release) in Guantánamo detention centre.

**Donald Trump becomes 37th President of the USA**

Donald Trump revokes 80 of Biden's ‘destructive and radical executive actions' within hours of returning to White House.

**What executive orders did Trump sign so far?**

The full list of executive orders signed so far and the text of each order can be found [here](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/).

**The economy and TikTok**

Trump signed a largely symbolic memorandum that he described as directing every federal agency to combat consumer inflation. By repealing Biden actions and adding his own orders, Trump is easing regulatory burdens on [oil and natural gas production](https://apnews.com/article/biden-offshore-drilling-trump-florida-atlantic-pacific-aa26f50e158fd4f9c24d368898244dce), something he promises will bring down costs of all consumer goods. Trump is specifically targeting Alaska for expanded fossil fuel production.

On trade, the president said he expects to impose 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico starting Feb. 1, but declined to flesh out his plans for taxing Chinese imports.

Trump also signed an order intended to pause Congress’ TikTok ban for 75 days, a period in which the president says he will seek a U.S. buyer in a deal that can protect national security interests while leaving the popular social media platform open to Americans.

**America First**

As he did during his first administration, Trump is pulling the U.S. out of the World Health Organization. He also ordered a comprehensive review of U.S. foreign aid spending. Both moves fit into his more isolationist “America First” approach to international affairs.

In more symbolic moves, Trump planned to sign an order renaming the Gulf of Mexico, making it the [Gulf of America](https://apnews.com/article/trump-gulf-of-mexico-bc438f4feca1234475a1adef99344da7). The highest mountain in North America, [now known as Denali](https://apnews.com/article/trump-denali-mckinley-alaska-57b2a44d878aa7ac927d346fcdf824b8), will revert back to Mount McKinley, its name until President Barack Obama changed it. And Trump signed an order that flags must be at full height at every future Inauguration Day. The order came because former President Jimmy Carter’s death had prompted flags to be at half-staff. Trump demanded they be moved up Monday. Another Trump order calls for promoting “Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture.”

**Immigration and national security**

Trump reversed several immigration orders from Biden’s presidency, including one that narrowed deportation priorities to people who commit serious crimes, are deemed national security threats or were stopped at the border. It returns the government to Trump’s first-term policy that everyone in the country illegally is a priority for deportation.

The president declared a national emergency at [the U.S.-Mexico border](https://apnews.com/article/immigration-border-town-us-mexico-7b0e02f167bb6d01159f2fda80566752), and he plans to send U.S. troops to help support immigration agents and restrict refugees and asylum.

President Trump moved swiftly to [close down a government program](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/2cZk5YNghBKVsCX0cDo1NQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRpcbYEP0RtaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyNS8wMS8yMC91cy9wb2xpdGljcy90cnVtcC1zaHV0cy1kb3duLW1pZ3JhbnQtZW50cnktYXBwLWNicC1vbmUuaHRtbD9zbWlkPXVybC1zaGFyZVcDbnl0QgpnfwQxj2fOH0P2UhRsaXNlX3Jvc3NpQHlhaG9vLmNvbVgEAAAAAw~~) created by the Biden administration that had allowed migrants to use an app to make an appointment for admission into the United States.

The [Migrants were shocked](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/IIDfY28tgQtj0_oBhBvxLw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRpcbYEP0R0aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vbGl2ZS8yMDI1LzAxLzIwL3VzL3RydW1wLWV4ZWN1dGl2ZS1vcmRlcnMvbWlncmFudHMtY2Jwb25lLWFwcG9pbnRtZW50cy1tZXhpY28_c21pZD11cmwtc2hhcmVXA255dEIKZ38EMY9nzh9D9lIUbGlzZV9yb3NzaUB5YWhvby5jb21YBAAAAAM~) as the message flashed on their phones: “Existing appointments have been cancelled.” Trump has promised to deport millions of people who are living in the country without permission. His team said he would sign 10 executive orders cracking down on immigration and immigrants.

Immigration and the Border:

* [Bar asylum](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/guaranteeing-the-states-protection-against-invasion/) for people newly arriving at the southern border.
* [Move to end birthright citizenship](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-meaning-and-value-of-american-citizenship/), which is guaranteed by the 14th Amendment, for the children of undocumented immigrants. The president cannot change the Constitution on his own, so it is not yet clear how Mr. Trump plans to withhold the benefits of citizenship to a group of people born in the United States. Any move is all but certain to be challenged in court. Twenty-two Democratic-led states sue over Trump birthright citizenship order (https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jan/21/trump-birthright-citizenship-lawsuit?CMP=Share\_AndroidApp\_Other)
* [Suspend](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/realigning-the-united-states-refugee-admissions-program/) the [Refugee Admissions Program](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/22/us/resettlement-program-immigration-trump.html) “until such time as the further entry into the United States of refugees aligns with the interests of the United States.”
* Declare migrant crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border [to be a national emergency](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/declaring-a-national-emergency-at-the-southern-border-of-the-united-states/), allowing Mr. Trump to unilaterally unlock federal funding for border wall construction, without approval from Congress, for stricter enforcement efforts.
* [Resume a policy](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/securing-our-borders/) requiring people seeking asylum to wait in Mexico while an immigration judge considers their cases.

Meanwhile, on national security, the president revoked any active security clearances from a long list of his perceived enemies, including former director of national intelligence James Clapper, Leon Panetta, a former director of the CIA and defense secretary, and his own former national security adviser, John Bolton.

**Climate and energy**

As expected, Trump signed documents he said will formally withdraw the U.S. from the [Paris climate agreements](https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/national-international/changing-climate/what-is-the-paris-agreement-and-what-will-a-us-withdrawal-mean-the-move-explained/3651988/).

A study published in the Journal Nature Climate Change shows that a third of the Artic’s Landmass is now a source of carbon, as President Donald Trump was blasted for an executive order that one critic said shows he wants to turn the Alaskan Arctic into the "the world's largest gas station." The study, which was first [reported](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/21/third-of-arctic-carbon-sink-now-a-source-of-emissions-study) on by The [Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/21/third-of-arctic-carbon-sink-now-a-source-of-emissions-study) was released the day after President [Donald Trump](https://www.commondreams.org/tag/donald-trump) issued multiple presidential actions [influencing](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/01/20/trump-executive-orders-list/) the United States' ability to confront the climate crisis, which is primarily caused by fossil fuel emissions, [including one](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-alaskas-extraordinary-resource-potential/) directly impacting resource extraction in Alaska, a section of which is within the Arctic Circle.

Additionally, Trump declared an energy emergency as he promised to “drill, baby, drill,” and said he will eliminate what he calls Biden’s electric vehicle mandate.

**Overhauling federal bureaucracy**

Trump has halted federal government hiring, excepting the military and other parts of government that went unnamed. He added a freeze on new federal regulations while he builds out his second administration.

He formally empowered the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, which is being led by Elon Musk, the world’s richest man. Ostensibly an effort to streamline government, DOGE is not an official agency. But Trump appears poised to give Musk wide latitude to recommend cuts in government programs and spending.

**Diversity, equity and inclusion and transgender rights**

Trump is rolling back [protections for transgender people](https://apnews.com/article/election-2024-transgender-rights-lgbtq-donald-trump-3bb3ace81ff32b6dec382b486ec6a772) and terminating diversity, equity and inclusion programs within the federal government. Both are major shifts for the federal policy and are in line with Trump’s campaign trail promises. One order declares that the federal government would recognize only two immutable sexes: male and female. And they’re to be defined based on whether people are born with eggs or sperm, rather than on their chromosomes, according to details of the upcoming order. Under the order, federal prisons and shelters for migrants and rape victims would be segregated by sex as defined by the order. And federal taxpayer money could not be used to fund “transition services.”

Donald Trump has signed an executive order aimed at the transgender community on Tuesday, this time prohibiting gender transitions for people under the age of 19.

“It is the policy of the United States that it will not fund, sponsor, promote, assist, or support the so-called ‘transition’ of a child from one sex to another, and it will rigorously enforce all laws that prohibit or limit these destructive and life-altering procedures,” [reads](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-children-from-chemical-and-surgical-mutilation/) the president’s executive order.

A separate order halts DEI programs, directing the White House to identify and end them within the government.

**Death Penalty**

Trump signed a sweeping execution order on the death penalty, directing the attorney general to “take all necessary and lawful action” to ensure that states have enough lethal injection drugs to carry out executions.

Trump wrote that “politicians and judges who oppose capital punishment have defied and subverted the laws of our country.”

[A moratorium on federal executions had been in place since 2021](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-executions-government-and-politics-9daf230ef2257b901cb0dfeeeb60be44), and only three defendants remain on federal death row after Biden converted 37 of their sentences to life in prison.

President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order, includ­ing a call to ​“restore” the [fed­er­al death penal­ty](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/actions/campaign/t/click?cid=c6744b268dbbc0mqs&sid=s679799fd13628sek&lid=l67979a3961b1ffkg). The Order, while lack­ing many impor­tant details, instructs the Department of Justice’s Attorney General to ​“pur­sue the death penal­ty for all crimes of a sever­i­ty demand­ing its use,” includ­ing the killing of a law enforce­ment offi­cer or ​“a cap­i­tal crime com­mit­ted by an ille­gal alien present in this coun­try” and to encour­age state attor­neys gen­er­al to bring state-cap­i­tal charges for these crimes. President Trump also calls on the Attorney General to ​“take all nec­es­sary and law­ful action” to ensure that states with cap­i­tal pun­ish­ment have suf­fi­cient access to the drugs need­ed for lethal injec­tion exe­cu­tions. The Order also directs the Attorney General to seek to over­rule any estab­lished Supreme Court prece­dent that ​“lim­it the author­i­ty of state and fed­er­al gov­ern­ments to impose capital punishment.”

**Health**

Medicaid payment portals are down following the Trump administration’s decision to [freeze trillions of dollars](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jan/28/trump-pauses-grants-loans) in federal funding, an effort by the new president to root out “[wokeness](https://apnews.com/article/trump-dei-executive-order-diversity-inclusion-f67ea86032986084dd71c5aa0c6b8d1d)” in the federal government, multiple sources have reported.

A health insurance program for low-income individuals, Medicaid is run jointly by the states and the federal government. With the Children’s Health Insurance Program (Chip), Medicaid insures more than one in five Americans, or about 79 million people, [nearly half](https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/program-information/medicaid-and-chip-enrollment-data/report-highlights/index.html) of whom are children. Medicaid also pays for roughly two in every five births in the US. “My staff has confirmed reports that Medicaid portals are down in all 50 states following last night’s federal funding freeze,” Ron Wyden, a US Democratic senator from Oregon, said in a now-viral social media post Tuesday.

**Justice**

Trump [pardoned nearly all of the 1,600 rioters](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/n3km7MB7AEl4RTYn49SfcQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRpcbYEP0RWaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyNS8wMS8yMC91cy9wb2xpdGljcy90cnVtcC1wYXJkb25zLWphbi02Lmh0bWw_c21pZD11cmwtc2hhcmVXA255dEIKZ38EMY9nzh9D9lIUbGlzZV9yb3NzaUB5YWhvby5jb21YBAAAAAM~) of the mob that attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Here’s the latest round of Press Releases from Amnesty USA:

* Press Releases: [all press releases are on this AIUSA page](https://www.amnestyusa.org/news/) - please note that AIUSA can’t respond to everything Trump does with a statement, sometimes they will be issuing tweets instead on their account: @amnestyusa

* Key press releases include:

February 5: Israel/ OPT: President Trump’s Claim That US Will Take Over Gaza and Forcibly Deport Palestinians Appalling and Unlawful

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/israel-opt-president-trumps-claim-that-us-will-take-over-gaza-and-forcibly-deport-palestinians-appalling-and-unlawful/>

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February 4: U.S. Withdrawal from UN Human Rights Council Is Performative Disregard for Human Rights

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/u-s-withdrawal-from-un-human-rights-council-is-performative-disregard-for-human-rights/>

February 1: Abrupt Collapse of USAID Would Put Human Rights of Millions at Greater Risk

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/abrupt-collapse-of-usaid-would-put-human-rights-of-millions-at-greater-risk/>

January 31: Antisemitism Executive Order Wrongly Targets Students Exercising Rights to Free Expression

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/antisemitism-executive-order-wrongly-targets-students-exercising-rights-to-free-expression/>

January 28: Executive Orders attacking transgender people cause harm, undermine human rights

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/executive-orders-attacking-transgender-people-cause-harm-undermine-human-rights/>

January 27: The Trump Administration Must Protect and Prioritize Human Rights in Ukraine

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/the-trump-administration-must-protect-and-prioritize-human-rights-in-ukraine>

January 24: Trump’s Reinstatement of Global Gag Rule Is Assault on Rights of Pregnant People Across the World

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/trumps-reinstatement-of-global-gag-rule-is-assault-on-rights-of-pregnant-people-across-the-world/>

January 20: Amnesty International USA Reaction to President Trump’s Anti-Immigrant Executive Actions

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/amnesty-international-usa-reaction-to-president-trumps-anti-immigrant-executive-actions/>

January 20: Withdrawing United States from Paris Agreement is Reckless and Short-Sighted

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/withdrawing-united-states-from-paris-agreement-is-reckless-and-short-sighted/>

* Campaign priority for first 100 days: Stopping mass deportations and defending the right to asylum, as part of longer-term work on refugee and migrants’ rights. We will work on an Action Circular for this and disseminate it next week. Sections are asked to issue this [Urgent Action](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/8933/2025/en/) in the meantime that requests hand-written letters to the White House until we have an email address for the new administration.
* AIUSA has launched a campaign to save the right to asylum and stop Congressional funding for mass deportations, with a big push in the first 100 days of the administration.

**TAKE ACTION**

* AIUSA has [launched a petition](https://act.amnestyusa.org/page/164291/action/1?ea.tracking.id=spgcowst&_gl=1*1qclbnz*_gcl_au*NDQwMDAxMDEuMTczNDM4MTA4MQ..). Please sign.
* AIUSA has launched a series of email alerts that sections can use or repurpose to update their supporters, including  you can repurpose <https://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email?mid=aef068ef084d4e76b4116d54631cf810> any way you want to.

## Guantánamo Detention Centre

So there are still 15 detainees in Guantánamo, 3 of them approved for release. Joe Biden reduced the number of detainees but did not close the detention centre. So, we carry on with our actions.

**APPG to close Guantánamo**

The date of the inauguration of the new APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) is planned for the 11 March 2025. The good news is that Chris Law has agreed to continue to chair.

The Aims of the APPG had been agreed by all members, as follows:

1) To urge the UK government to use its influence as a key ally of the USA to call on the US government to finally secure the closure of the facility;

2) To urge the UK government to work internationally on the urgent and humane resettlement of detainees unanimously approved for release from Guantanamo by high-level US government review processes;

3) To urge the UK government to use its influence to call on the US government to ensure that the detainees receive adequate care for their long-standing physical and mental health needs, as required under international humanitarian law.

**The Guantánamo Network**

It includes the following organisations:  Amnesty International, Close Guantánamo, Freedom from Torture, Guantánamo Justice Campaign and London Guantánamo Campaign.

Join the Guantánamo Network: we have an online one-hour meeting every second week to update the information, discuss lines of action and organise the work involved among ourselves.

**Volunteers urgently needed for the following vigils:**

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We hold a vigil every first Wednesday of the month. The next vigil will take place on:

**Wednesday 5th March 2025 from 13:00 to 15:00 (or any time you can spare) on Parliament Square.**

**Exhibition of art from Guantánamo detainees :** has been extended until the end of February.

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