

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Amnesty International urges Iceland to accept more refugees

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Iceland

Amnesty International welcomes the fact that 19 states have recommended that Iceland ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The organization is pleased to note that this recommendation enjoys the support of Iceland.¹ Iceland had already committed, during its first UPR in 2012, to consider ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture.² In 2015, the Parliament of Iceland instructed the government to ratify the Optional Protocol to Convention against Torture.³ Amnesty International urges Iceland to complete the ratification of these instruments without delay.

The global refugee crisis demands that states accept more refugees, including through resettlement and relocation programs. Amnesty International welcomes Iceland's general pledge to accept a greater number of refugees,⁴ including Syrian refugees through UNHCR.⁵ However, Iceland has yet to make a more detailed commitment with regard to the number of refugees it plans to accept. Amnesty International calls on Iceland to make such a commitment, and consider participating in current efforts to relocate refugees within Europe, in addition to its participation in resettlement schemes.

Amnesty International welcomes Iceland's efforts to establish a new national human rights institution, in line with the Paris Principles, building on the Icelandic Human Rights Centre.⁶ The organization encourages the government to expedite these efforts in close consultation with civil society.

After being charged by Parliament in 2010 with strengthening the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression,⁷ the government produced a draft legislative bill in 2016, decriminalizing defamation. Amnesty International therefore regrets Iceland's rejection of the recommendation to decriminalize defamation within its Civil Code;⁸ the organization encourages Iceland to reconsider and accept this recommendation.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Iceland on 16 March 2017 during its 34th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered an oral statement.

¹ A/HRC/34/7, recommendations 115.1-115.13 and 115.19.

² See A/HRC/28/59/Add.1, para. 18, cf. A/HRC/WG.6/26/ISL/2, para. 1.

³ See Parliamentary Resolution No. 8/145, parliamentary document 677 — 6th matter at the 145th legislative session, passed on 19 December 2015.

⁴ See Declaration of Principle of the Government of Iceland, 10 January 2017, page 4.

⁵ See A/HRC/34/7, para. 85.

⁶ See A/HRC/34/7, para 50.

⁷ See Parliamentary Resolution No. 23/138, parliamentary document 1392 — 383rd matter at the 138th legislative session, passed on 16 June 2010.

⁸ See A/HRC/34/7/Add.1, para 6 (on A/HRC/34/7, para. 117.41).

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