

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Amnesty International tells Ukraine's new parliament it's time to address country's appalling human rights record

Amnesty International is urging Ukraine's newly elected parliament to address urgently the country's appalling human rights record as the Verkhovna Rada opens its first session today.

The human rights organisation calls on parliamentarians to get to work fulfilling Ukraine's outstanding human rights obligations.

Since Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the country has made some progress towards protecting human rights. However, this progress needs to be rapidly accelerated if the country is to fulfil the commitments it has made to the European Union, UN and Council of Europe.

Ukrainian politicians cannot seriously expect closer integration with Europe as long as their citizens continue to be routinely abused by police, imprisoned because of their political affiliation, or discriminated against because of their gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

The organisation is delivering a set of its recommendations on how to address rights abuses in the country to each of Ukraine's 445 members of parliament, along with a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Amnesty International wants every member of the newly elected parliament to know that, for the next five years, they are responsible for the rights of the Ukrainian people, and accountable to them.

In a letter to parliament the organisation reiterated its major human rights concerns - including police torture and impunity, discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and the forced return of refugees and asylum seekers.

The organization continues to urge the government to solve the problem of torture and other ill-treatment by police, and to establish a fully resourced independent agency to investigate all allegations of human rights violations by police officers.

Police are encouraged to torture detainees by a climate of impunity, caused by a lack of adequate investigations and prosecutions of those officers who abuse the people they are supposed to protect. The new parliament is now accountable for police reform and needs to protect all Ukrainian citizens from torture.

The letter reiterates a call for draft law # 8711, which seeks to outlaw 'homosexual propaganda', to be thrown out. The law passed its first reading during the previous parliament despite the fact that if enacted it would breach Ukraine's commitments to uphold the right to freedom of expression.

The letter also called on Ukraine's new parliament to ratify several international treaties as a matter of priority – including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

It further makes recommendations on reforming the system for dealing with refugees and asylum-seekers in Ukraine. Parliament needs to amend the law in line with international standards so that refugees and asylum-seekers are no longer returned to countries where they face torture or other ill-treatment.

Please see also:

Amnesty International's [Open Letter](#) to Ukraine's new parliament

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