

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

BRIEFING TO UN MEMBER STATES ON AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERNS AHEAD OF THE 74th SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The upcoming 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly is an opportunity for all states to support the promotion and protection of human rights at a time when they are under threat from increasing levels of authoritarianism, populism, conflict and tension in various parts of the world. Growing attempts to undermine long-standing human rights standards are also a serious concern. Member states should act with commitment and determination to respect, protect and promote human rights and uphold international humanitarian law in all situations, in particular those where civilians suffer on a daily basis.

In line with the very purposes and principles set out by the UN Charter, member states have committed themselves to “achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” Amnesty International calls on all member states to act in accordance with this commitment, in recognition that human rights are key for the prevention and resolution of conflict and are crucial for ensuring that all individuals can live in freedom from fear and freedom from want. Human rights are essential for the genuine achievement of equality, including gender equality, and in ensuring that no one is left behind.

Amnesty International looks to all states to stand up for victims of human rights violations by

- making positive statements on human rights issues brought to the attention of the General Assembly by the UN system as well as by other reputable sources;
- supporting initiatives during the General Assembly that seek to address those violations;
- resisting attempts to block discussion of human rights situations and concerns, including through the use of procedural devices such as No-Action Motions.

THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Amnesty International urges all member states to speak out at every opportunity about the difficult situation faced by human rights defenders and the shrinking space for civil society throughout the world and to call for the release of anyone imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.

THE URGENT NEED TO MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS

During the 74th session of the UN General Assembly, states will have the opportunity to debate important issues that are essential for the enjoyment of rights and even the prospects for human survival. We are encouraged that the UN Secretary-General has convened all member states to discuss the climate crisis in the **Climate Action Summit**, to take place on 23 September 2019. We hope that this Summit will deliver solutions with people and their fundamental rights at their core and draw attention to our recommendations for states and corporations in the run up to and after the Summit.¹ Prior to the UN Summit, on 18-19 September, Amnesty and other civil society organizations will hold the **Peoples' Summit on Climate, Rights and Human Survival** – the first ever global summit on human rights and climate

¹ Amnesty International, Recommendations to UN Member States ahead of the Climate Action Summit 2019, 12 August 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/0870/2019/en/>

that aims to galvanize the human rights community to urgently scale-up its efforts on climate justice, creating the most diverse movement ever assembled to tackle the climate crisis.

THEMATIC RESOLUTIONS

The General Assembly will consider several thematic resolutions on key human rights issues, including the resolutions on human rights defenders, torture, the rights to water and sanitation, and human rights and counter-terrorism. Amnesty International calls on all member states to support strong resolutions on these topics, by ensuring that their texts do not include any weakening language or amendments that undermine existing standards and by voting in favour if a vote is called.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER STATES

The organization calls on all UN member states to:

- **Address the Climate Crisis by:**
 - **Announcing ambitious new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at the Climate Action Summit or by early 2020 at the latest which will align their emissions reduction targets for 2030 and 2050 with the imperative to keep the increase of global average temperature as low as possible and no higher than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;**
 - **Ensuring that the transition towards a zero-carbon economy and a more resilient society is just, fair, human rights compliant and reduces inequality;**
 - **Respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to information, participation and to effective remedies, as well as to freedom of expression and assembly in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NDCs and all climate policies and strategies;**
 - **Wealthier states taking the lead in announcing emission reduction targets that would enable them to halve emissions well before 2030 and reach net zero emissions well before 2050, given their greater capacity and greater contribution to the climate crisis; substantially increasing funding and support for human rights-consistent climate initiatives, including technology transfer, in less wealthy countries that would not be able to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change themselves; and providing means, support and access to legal remedy to people whose rights have been negatively affected as the result of loss and damage caused by climate change.**
- **Ensure that country resolutions introduced in the General Assembly's Third Committee and Plenary include strong human rights provisions, and that any attempts to use procedural devices such as 'No-Action Motions', to stop the resolutions from being discussed, are defeated.**
- **Move the General Assembly to take concrete and effective steps towards ensuring accountability for human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity in various states and regions of the world, including Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Iran, Myanmar, and Syria.**
- **Support strong resolutions on human rights defenders, torture, water and sanitation and human rights and counter-terrorism and other thematic resolutions on key human rights issues.**
- **Speak out on the difficult situation faced by human rights defenders and the shrinking space for civil society throughout the world. Demand the release of all those imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.**
- **Send a clear message on the importance of the respect, protection and promotion of women and girls' rights and of ending impunity for violations of women and girls' human rights by state and non-state actors.**
- **Take a strong position on non-discrimination of all individuals based on sex, race, religion and other characteristics, and especially regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Make every effort to ensure that sexual orientation and gender identity are not undermined or ignored.**
- **Take the opportunity provided by the UN Treaty Event held at the start of the General Assembly to ratify, sign or accede to any human rights treaties to which the member state is not yet party, as well as to encourage other countries to do so. We particularly urge states not yet party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) to take this opportunity to proceed with the deposit of the instrument of ratification of this treaty, to coincide with the 30th anniversary of its adoption.**