

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL:
SUBMISSION TO THE 50TH SESSION OF THE UPR WORKING GROUP, OCT – NOV 2025

SUMMARY

This update was prepared in support of Amnesty International's previous submission for the fifth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States of America in October – November 2025. Amnesty International updates the UPR Working Group with respect to the current human rights situation, specifically with developments that occurred in 2025 and 2026 on the right to protest, refugee and migrant rights and international treaties and mechanisms. It ends with a set of recommendations to the United States of America which, if implemented, would contribute to improving the human rights situation with respect to these three issues. Amnesty International restates the issues and recommendations made in its initial submission.

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Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights and other international human rights standards.

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UPDATE TO SITUATION ON THE GROUND

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

1. The Trump administration significantly impacted free expression by threatening and criminalizing protest, dissent, and academic freedom. It targeted foreign-born students protesting the Israeli government's ongoing genocide in Gaza and people protesting and monitoring the administration's aggressive immigration enforcement actions, particularly by constraining protest, undermining universities as a civic space, and building a permission structure to use the military in forms of domestic enforcement.
2. The Trump administration detained and sought to deport students who expressed views and engaged in protests in solidarity with the rights of the Palestinian people in particular.¹ Early in the president's term, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that he had revoked the visas of at least 300 students and visitors, claiming that the individuals had engaged in "vandalizing universities, harassing students, taking over buildings, creating a ruckus" without providing any evidence of their individual conduct.² To pursue its agenda, the administration used the "Catch and Revoke" program, combining social media monitoring, visa status tracking, and automated threat assessments, to revoke visas at scale.³ In August 2025, the US Department of State announced that it had revoked 6,000 student visas, of which between 200 and 300 were identified as support for terrorism under a broad federal statute.⁴ On 12 January 2026, the State Department announced that it had revoked over 100,000 visas in 2025, of which 8,000 were student visas for "encounters with law enforcement for criminal activity."⁵ At least eleven international students or activists were targeted for detention and deportation through this process by the government for their advocacy on Palestinian human rights, including Mahmoud Khalil and Leqaa Kordia.⁶ All of the international students and protesters who were previously detained for their protest activity were eventually ordered released as of March 2026 and continue to fight their re-detention and deportation in court.⁷
3. President Trump unnecessarily and inappropriately deployed military resources in the policing of protests, to support aggressive and often unlawful immigration enforcement and under the false pretext of dealing with urban crime. The pattern of National Guard deployments, alongside increased federal immigration enforcement operations, also reflected an underlying racial discrimination that conflated crime with the race of city leaders or majority of residents. In six out of nine of the cities where President Trump either threatened or deployed the National Guard, the mayor was a Black mayor of a city with a large Black and Brown population.⁸ In each case, he framed the cities as locations rampant with crime and violence needing the National Guard to step in for law enforcement.⁹ He deployed the National Guard to police protests with incidents of violence, triggered by widespread, militarized workplace and public immigration raids in Los Angeles, over the objections of the State's governor; a few days later, 700 US Marines were deployed to be stationed outside a federal detention facility and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office.¹⁰ The declaration of a "crime emergency" in Washington, DC, was used to override local authority and send federal agents and National Guard members into the city.
4. In addition to Los Angeles and Washington, DC, President Trump deployed the National Guard with and without governors' or mayors' consent to Portland, Oregon; Chicago, Illinois; Memphis, Tennessee; and New Orleans, Louisiana.¹¹ After the US Supreme Court ruled that President Trump could not deploy troops in the Chicago area over the objections of Illinois officials, he announced he would pause deployments to cities where governors had objected but suggested he would not hesitate to deploy troops in the future.¹²
5. Appearing before hundreds of generals and admirals summoned by the US Secretary of Defense, President Trump referred to US cities as training grounds for the armed forces and spoke of needing the US military to combat what he called the "invasion from within".¹³
6. President Trump used immigration in particular to test the reception of the courts, Congress, and the public to an

expansive use of militarization. He sent federal agents from across executive branch agencies and troops to cities led largely by Democratic mayors to assist in immigration raids. Under the direction of US Border Patrol Chief Gregory Bovino, militarized immigration enforcement began in Los Angeles in June and moved to the Chicago area in September.¹⁴ In an incident that grabbed national attention, a pre-dawn Chicago raid in September on an apartment building involved masked, armed federal agents breaking down doors, using flashbangs, and zip-tying residents including children.¹⁵ Bovino continued aggressive operations in North Carolina and New Orleans before returning to Chicago at year's end.¹⁶ In addition to impacting immigrant communities, violent immigration enforcement in Minneapolis on 7 and 24 January 2026 led to the shooting deaths of two local community members by ICE and Border Patrol agents respectively in two separate incidents while the individuals killed were acting as observers of the immigration enforcement actions prior to their deaths.¹⁷ Throughout these efforts, immigration agents increasingly arrested and threatened the arrest of individuals who were watching, filming, and protesting immigration arrests.¹⁸

7. Reporters and journalists covering these protests and events were also targeted with excessive use of force through the use of rubber bullets, pepper balls and tear gas.¹⁹ Journalists and reporters were arrested and several even faced deportation for their reporting on these immigration surges and ensuing protests.²⁰

Refugee and Migrant Rights

8. The Trump administration has aggressively advanced an anti-migrant, anti-refugee agenda, implementing racist and xenophobic executive orders that have dehumanized and criminalized migrants and people seeking safety.²¹ Almost every federal enforcement agency has been deputized to act as immigration agents, vastly expanding immigration enforcement efforts and implementing “Kavanaugh Stops”, named after a Supreme Court Justice who issued an opinion allowing for immigration stops and questioning based upon perceived ethnicity, spoken language, or occupation as “relevant factors.”²² Masked agents have seized migrants, asylum seekers, and US citizens; armored vehicles have patrolled streets; and agents have targeted areas near schools, faith centers, hospitals, and other previously prohibited areas for immigration enforcement.²³
9. The Trump administration ended parole-based humanitarian programs and Temporary Protected Status for many nationalities.²⁴ Since 20 January 2025, more than 1.5 million immigrants have either lost or will lose their temporary lawful presence, putting them at risk of unlawful deportation.²⁵ It is the most rapid loss in lawful presence for immigrants in recent US history.²⁶ The US Refugee Admissions Program was suspended, and a travel ban was expanded from 19 countries to 39 and added individuals who hold Palestinian Authority travel documents.²⁷
10. The mass immigration detention system has expanded, holding thousands of people in overcrowded, inhumane facilities, sometimes on military bases; limiting access to bond; and resuming the detention and separation of families.²⁸ In February 2026, there were over 68,000 individuals in ICE detention, an increase of over 70% from the number of people in detention at the end of the Biden administration.²⁹ New state-funded detention facilities have been built, such as “Alligator Alcatraz.”³⁰ Amnesty International has documented cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment at “Alligator Alcatraz” and the Krome North Service Processing Center in Florida that, in some cases at “Alligator Alcatraz,” amount to torture.³¹ At least 33 individuals died in ICE detention in 2025, and at least 14 have died in ICE custody in 2026.³²
11. Government agencies have been ordered to enforce immigration laws aggressively, deporting individuals without due process to places where they may be at real risk of serious human rights abuses.³³ Invoking the Alien Enemies Act, the Trump administration illegally expelled 252 Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers to CECOT despite court orders barring their removal in some instances.³⁴ Many of the people expelled were actively engaged in immigration proceedings, had pending asylum claims, or had been granted protection under US law.³⁵ Families received no official information, and people were removed from tracking systems, making it impossible for their family members or lawyers to locate them.³⁶ These individuals were expelled without any notice or due process,

and over multiple months, neither the US nor Salvadoran authorities provided any official information on the identities of the individuals expelled to El Salvador or their whereabouts. After four months, these men were returned to Venezuela. Amnesty International considers that these individuals were subjected to enforced disappearance.³⁷

12. Third-country removals raised additional concerns about removals without notice or opportunity to contest them. The Supreme Court ruling in *D.V.D. v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security* permitted the Trump administration to continue removing people to countries that are not their designated country of removal, where they have no personal links and potentially face significant, potentially life-threatening dangers, without first providing them notice, due process, or the opportunity to demonstrate credible fear of harm.³⁸

International Treaties and mechanisms

13. Although the US government had long positioned itself, at least rhetorically, as a global champion of human rights, the Trump administration quickly drove the USA in reverse. The administration retreated from critical global human rights agreements and bodies, cruelly and chaotically zeroed out foreign assistance, engaged in extrajudicial killings outside its borders and unlawful military action, and demonstrated a disregard for human rights and global norms.
14. President Trump withdrew from and weakened multiple multilateral bodies and agreements through executive actions, undermining decades of global efforts toward responsibility sharing and mutual action to support human rights and the rule of law. Early in the administration, President Trump signed an order authorizing sanctions of individuals and organizations engaged with the International Criminal Court;³⁹ ending participation in the UN Human Rights Council;⁴⁰ withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement,⁴¹ the World Health Organization,⁴² and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;⁴³ and cutting funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.⁴⁴ President Trump announced withdrawal from an additional 66 international organizations in January 2026, including those that serve child survivors of violence, women and marginalized populations around the world, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁴⁵ The withdrawals and funding cuts created discriminatory outcomes for people seeking justice, racialized groups, women, LGBTI people, and others.⁴⁶ While the UN Human Rights Council has taken the step of rescheduling the United States' review for November 2026, the US risks becoming the first country in the history of the UN's Universal Periodic Review process not to engage in any way.⁴⁷
15. The 2024 annual US Department of State human rights report reflected the Trump administration's disregard for human rights and its dehumanization of certain populations. In addition to eliminating entire sections on key issues, such as discrimination against LGBTI people, there were also arbitrary omissions within existing sections of the report based on the country in question. Rather than providing a consistent and truthful accounting of human rights violations around the world, the report sent a chilling message that the US is willing to overlook some abuses and ignore some people experiencing human rights violations. The 2025 reports threaten to deepen this risk, as the Trump administration issued new reporting guidelines that appear to ignore or even condone many grave abuses, based on the identity of the person experiencing them and seems to signal a shift away from the universality of human rights towards an effort to institutionalize a philosophy of natural rights—an elusive and undefined term that appears to recognize rights based on identity or nationality.
16. The abrupt, chaotic and sweeping suspension of US foreign assistance caused and exacerbated human rights abuses against millions of vulnerable people globally and torpedoed multilateral norms of cooperation. The scale and suddenness of the cuts created a life-threatening vacuum that other governments and aid organizations could not realistically fill in the immediate term, violating the rights to life and health and the ability to seek humanitarian protection for millions.⁴⁸ Although the number of deaths is not fully documented, people died as a result of the rapid dismantling of USAID and funding cuts.⁴⁹

17. The Trump administration also demonstrated a blatant disregard for the right to life through its military actions. President Trump ordered military action in Venezuela, resulting in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, and raising grave concerns for the human rights of the Venezuelan population. The administration's actions violated international law.⁵⁰ This military operation followed a series of continuing illegal air strikes in the Eastern Pacific and the Caribbean from early September 2025 that, as of the end of March, has reportedly so far killed over 160 people.⁵¹ The Trump administration claims it is targeting purported drug boats, making it a law enforcement operation despite its insistence these boats are engaged in a conflict.⁵² The ramping up of the bombing campaign despite increased pressure from Congress signals total disregard for the law.⁵³ In March, the USA expanded the operations to include joint efforts in Ecuador, where the *New York Times* reported that one operation in which the USA claimed to have destroyed an armed group's training camp was actually a dairy farm.⁵⁴
18. On 28 February 2026, the US and Israel launched a joint military operation in Iran, with thousands of strikes across the country since. The Iranian authorities have launched retaliatory attacks across the region. The armed conflict rapidly expanded into regional hostilities across the Middle East and has resulted in significant loss of civilian life and destruction of civilian infrastructure. Evidence indicates that the USA directly struck a school building with guided weapons, pointing to a failure by US forces to take feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm in carrying out the attack, which is a serious breach of international humanitarian law.⁵⁵ This occurred after the administration began dismantling critical systems to reduce and better respond to civilian harm caused by US lethal actions abroad.⁵⁶ President Trump has also consistently made threats of intentional attacks on civilian infrastructure that would unleash catastrophic harm on millions of people as well as statements that would amount to atrocities if acted upon, including a threat to wipe out "a whole civilization" which, may amount to a threat of genocide.⁵⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE US GOVERNMENT:

- End intimidation and retaliation for exercising the rights to freedom of the press, speech, and peaceful protest, including through arrests, detention, surveillance, visa actions, deportation threats, or regulatory action, and ensure all agencies publicly reaffirm their obligations to respect civic space rights and uphold the rule of law.
- Enact the development of national guidelines on respecting and facilitating the right to peaceful protest, and for all law enforcement agencies to review their policies and the equipment used in the policing of demonstrations, consistent with international standards, including the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms; develop clear national guidance on the use of tear gas and other so-called less lethal weapons; and ensure accountability for unlawful force.
- Strengthen guardrails against the domestic use of the military for law enforcement, require transparent reporting and authorization for deployments, and prohibit funding for militarized protest suppression that violates human rights standards.
- End the practice of mass immigration detention and ensure detention is used only in extraordinary circumstances; end the use of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment in detention and ensure that all allegations of torture, ill-treatment or deaths in custody are promptly, impartially, and effectively investigated, and that perpetrators are held accountable; establish a right to counsel for people in immigration proceedings; respect the principle of non-refoulement at all times and ensure that no one, regardless of status, is returned to a place where their life or safety are at risk; ensure a fair, humane, and rights-based refugee admissions determination.

- Ensure effective access to due process, courts, and counsel for all people; establish a right to counsel for all people in immigration proceedings with fully funded appointed counsel and translation services; guarantee due process and transparency in all immigration proceedings; and facilitate the return of individuals deported, expelled, or transferred without due process.
- Recommit to international human rights bodies and accountability mechanisms by restoring engagement with UN processes, reversing measures that undermine international justice bodies, and ensuring the lawful use of force consistent with international law.
- Abide by international humanitarian and human rights law, prioritize the protection of civilians, and uphold the human rights of all persons deprived of liberty.
- Protect and restore foreign assistance and humanitarian funding consistent with international standards, ensure compliance with appropriations law, oppose measures that undermine international justice mechanisms and multilateral international instruments and agreements, establish reporting and oversight of US withdrawals from multilateral commitments, and require nonpartisan, non-discriminatory, annual human rights reports;
- Undertake thorough and independent investigations, reaching the highest levels of the US government, to determine responsibility for illegal airstrikes in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific and other military actions; ensure justice and accountability, including for both the direct perpetrators and the people who gave the orders for illegal and unlawful military actions.

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⁸ Amnesty International USA, "The racist subtext of Trump's militarized policing strategy", 28 August 2025, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/blog/the-racist-subtext-of-trumps-militarized-policing-strategy/>. At time of writing, cities identified: New York City, New York; Memphis, Tennessee; Chicago, Illinois; Baltimore, Maryland; Portland, Oregon; Washington, D.C.; San Francisco, California; Los Angeles, California; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁹ Amnesty International USA, "The racist subtext of Trump's militarized policing strategy" (previously cited).

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