



Amnesty International

Group 524

February 2026



Erosion of Human rights in US Stopping the Militarization of US Cities and ICE Abuses China IAR Case

Welcome

The focus this month is on the continuing serious human rights violations in the US and our China IAR case. We hope to see you on **February 17** 6pm at the Commons.

Human Rights In The US

Amnesty International's statements concerning the ongoing human rights violations in the United States are detailed on pages 2-3.

Urgent Actions in the US

As a response to the ongoing human rights violations in the United States Amnesty is calling for the end to militarized immigration enforcement (pages 4-5) and for real funding cuts to ICE and implementing safeguards for their operation (page 6).

China Case

We will continue our group's Individual At Risk case, **Yu Wensheng** in China. We will sign cards of solidarity and send an **updated** version of our letters this month. See pages 7-8.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.
Meeting Location: The Commons Residence Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd.



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org)



One Year into President Trump’s Return to Office, Authoritarian Practices Are Eroding Human Rights

January 20, 2026

Marking one year since President Trump returned to office, Amnesty International today rang the alarm bells on increasing authoritarian practices in the United States and a devastating erosion of human rights.

In a new report released today, [Ringling the Alarm Bells: Rising Authoritarian Practices and Erosion of Human Rights in the United States](#), Amnesty International documented how the Trump administration’s escalation of authoritarian practices, including closing civic space and undermining the rule of law, is eroding human rights in the U.S. and beyond.

“We are all witness to a dangerous trajectory under President Trump that has already led to a human rights emergency,” said Paul O’Brien, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA. “By shredding norms and concentrating power, the administration is trying to make it impossible for anyone to hold them accountable. There is no doubt that these authoritarian practices by the Trump administration are eroding human rights and increasing the risk for journalists and people who speak out or dissent, including protestors, lawyers, students, and human rights defenders.”

The report includes twelve interconnected areas in which the Trump administration is cracking the pillars of a free society, including attacks on freedom of the press and access to information, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, civil society organizations and universities, political opponents and critics, judges, lawyers, and the legal system, and due process. The report also documents attacks on refugee and migrant rights, the scapegoating of communities and the rollback of non-discrimination protections, the use of the military for domestic purposes, the dismantling of corporate accountability and anti-corruption measures, the expansion of surveillance without meaningful oversight, and efforts to undermine international systems designed to protect human rights.

As detailed in the report, these authoritarian tactics are mutually reinforcing: Students are arrested and detained for protesting on college campuses, entire communities are being flooded and terrorized with masked ICE agents, and the militarization of cities across the U.S. is becoming normalized. At the same time, press intimidation makes human rights violations and abuses harder to expose; retaliation against protest makes people afraid to speak; expanding surveillance and militarization increases the costs of dissent; and attacks on courts, lawyers, and oversight bodies make accountability harder to enforce.

These tactics are clearly eroding human rights, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, freedom of the press, access to information, equality and non-discrimination, due process, academic freedom, freedom from arbitrary detention, the right to seek asylum, the right to a fair trial, and even the right to life.

Amnesty International has long documented similar patterns in countries around the world. While contexts differ, governments consolidate power, control information, discredit critics, punish dissent, narrow civic space, and weaken mechanisms meant to ensure accountability.

“The attack on civic space and the rule of law and the erosion of human rights in the United States mirrors the global pattern Amnesty has seen and warned about for decades,” said O’Brien. “Importantly, our experience shows that by the time authoritarian practices are fully entrenched, the institutions meant to restrain abuses of power are already severely compromised.”



In the report, Amnesty International sets forth a comprehensive set of recommendations – to the United States Executive Branch, Congress, state and local governments and law enforcement agencies, international actors and other governments, corporate actors such as technology companies, and the public – aimed at reversing this embrace of authoritarian practices and preventing the normalization of increased repression and human rights violations. It calls for urgent action to protect civic space, restore rule of law safeguards, strengthen accountability, and ensure that human rights violations are neither ignored nor accepted as inevitable.

“We can, and we must, forge a different path,” O’Brien said. “Authoritarian practices only take root when they are allowed to become normalized. We cannot let that happen in the United States. Together, we all have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to rise to this challenging time in our history and to protect human rights.”

In Aftermath of Another Killing, Congress Must Stop Funding ICE’s Deadly Abuses

January 24, 2026

Following yet another deadly shooting by federal agents in Minneapolis, Amy Fischer, Director for Refugee and Migrant Rights with Amnesty International USA said:

“Today’s fatal shooting by U.S. Border Patrol agents on the streets of Minneapolis is the latest devastating reminder that ICE and Border Patrol are not making our communities safer. Instead, they are operating with impunity, using deadly force in broad daylight, terrorizing neighborhoods, and tearing young children from their families.

“This killing is not an isolated incident. It is part of a broader pattern in which ICE, with its paramilitary-style operations, has been unleashed to carry out violent and abusive enforcement and detention practices with little oversight or accountability. From deadly street operations to the torture, neglect and other abuses documented in immigrant detention facilities, ICE has repeatedly violated human rights while facing virtually no consequences. In fact, the House voted Thursday to increase its funding by billions of dollars.

“How many more people must die before U.S. leaders act? At a moment when lives are being taken and communities are demanding answers, Congress must stop looking away. The U.S. Senate faces an urgent choice in the coming days: continue pouring billions of taxpayer dollars into a lawless agency that endangers lives with impunity or take meaningful action to rein in ICE and stop funding its abuses.

“Amnesty International calls on Congress to reject any additional funding for ICE and to immediately take steps to hold ICE accountable for the deaths and other human rights violations it has caused, and to end these deadly enforcement practices. Not one more life should be lost. Not one more dime should be spent enabling this horror.”



USA: STOP MILITARIZED IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT



Immigration agents have been committing widespread human rights violations with impunity, including extrajudicial executions, mass detentions, and deportations against communities in and around Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota and across the USA.

On January 7, 2026, immigration agents fatally shot Renee Good, a community responder in Minneapolis who was observing immigration authorities in her community. On January 24, Alex Pretti was also fatally shot by immigration agents in Minneapolis while filming them and attempting to help an individual being assaulted by an agent.

Demand an end to militarized immigration enforcement now.

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DHS Secretary Kristi Noem
300 7th St, SW,
Washington, DC 20024, USA
Email: kristi.noem@hq.dhs.gov

Dear Secretary Noem,

I am alarmed by the violent, militarized immigration enforcement by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Border Patrol, and other federal agents in communities across the USA.

I am appalled to learn that, in a single month (January 2026), following the expansion of ICE and Border Patrol operations in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, federal agents have extrajudicially executed Renee Good, a writer and mother, and Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse, who were actively observing ICE and Border Patrol operations.

In addition, these federal agents have: threatened a pregnant immigration lawyer in her firm's parking lot; targeted and detained refugees; detained numerous U.S. citizens; smashed in the windows of cars and detained their occupants, including a U.S. citizen who was on her way to a medical appointment at a traumatic brain injury center; deployed crowd-control grenades and a tear gas container next to a car that contained six children, including a 6-month-old; subjected entire communities to racial profiling; and detained a 5-year-old and used him as "bait" to detain additional family members.

I demand that you uphold your international human rights obligations and end the militarized enforcement in Minnesota and across the USA; work with local authorities to investigate excessive use of force incidents against residents and protesters, including the use of lethal force, and hold those responsible accountable; and stop mass deportation, detention, and racial profiling in immigration enforcement.

Sincerely,



Dear Senator,

I'm writing as your constituent and a concerned human rights supporter of Amnesty International, following the decision to pass a continuing resolution in order to re-negotiate the DHS funding bill. That was the right move. Now Congress must ensure that any renegotiated bill must cut funds to ICE and Border Patrol and seriously rein in their lawless behavior. Across the country, communities are living in fear as federal immigration enforcement has escalated into unchecked violence. People have been killed, families terrorized, and neighborhoods flooded with masked agents acting with impunity. The racial profiling of our families, friends and neighbors and the arresting and breaking into homes without warrants must stop.

Congress should not reward this abuse with more money. No DHS bill should move forward without real cuts to ICE and Border Patrol. After these cuts, we demand the following basic safeguards:

1. Not another dollar for ICE or Border Patrol until Congress completes a full investigation into recent killings and use of force, including deadly force, by federal civil immigration officials into whether the administration has targeted cities for major enforcement operations on the basis of racial profiling or political retribution, and the deaths of Renee Good, Alex Pretti, Keith Porter, and Silverio Villegas González;
3. No enforcement at schools, hospitals, places of worship, or other sensitive locations;
4. An end to family detention and private detention contracts;
5. Real accountability for abuses by federal officers, including ending qualified immunity;
6. No expansion of mass enforcement operations targeting refugees and immigrant communities.

Congress already handed DHS nearly unlimited sums in the reconciliation bill that was enacted last July. Providing more is unconscionable, given ICE and Border Patrol's increasing brutality and lawlessness in our communities.

You and your colleagues have real leverage right now. Please use it. Do not allow any renegotiated DHS bill to move forward unless it includes real cuts, strict limits, and meaningful accountability. Our communities' lives and rights depend on it.

Thank you,



Individual At Risk Case

We have not received any response to our efforts as of this writing and I have reached out to our case coordinator to see if there is more we can do.

Our group has been selected to work on the case of **Yu Wensheng** of China.

The last update:

Xu Yan visited Yu Wensheng with their son on early March, and they found that his conditions in prison are quite poor. The treatment he is receiving in prison is substandard. Despite the fact that his family has deposited money for him, he is unable to use it within the prison, which often leaves him hungry due to the insufficient prison meals. Additionally, the prison does not allow his family to send him clothing, and he is forced to wear old, worn-out prison-issued garments. Xu Yan and their son are deeply concerned about his well-being given these conditions. Yu and Xu have expressed a strong desire for him to be transferred to another prison, ideally one in Beijing. Beijing is Yu's registered domicile. Currently, Xu and their son must travel over 1,000 kilometres to visit him, which is physically, emotionally and financially exhausting for them, especially as both Xu and the son are in poor health. She also hopes the Chinese authorities will remove the individuals who are stationed 24/7 to monitor her and her son, allowing them to move freely without surveillance.

I have updated our regular letters to reflect these concerns and a sample letter is on the next page.



Chief Procurator Zhu Yapin
People's Procuratorate of Beijing Municipality
No. 9 Jianguomen North Street
Dongjeng District, Beijing, 100010
People's Republic of China

Dear Chief Procurator Zhu:

On April 13, 2023, prominent human rights lawyer **Yu Wengsheng** and his wife Xu Yan were taken into police custody while en route to meet the delegation of the European Union to China in Beijing, where they were to attend a meeting with the EU's Ambassador to China, Jorge Toledo Albinana, and another senior EU official. On October 29, 2024, Suzhou Intermediate Court sentenced Yu Wengsheng to three years in prison and Xu Yan, to one year and nine months in prison for "inciting subversion of state power." Vague and overly broad charges such as these are often used in China to prosecute persons who were merely exercising their guaranteed human rights.

On January 6, 2025, the Suzhou Intermediate People's Court rejected Yu Wengsheng's appeal against his three-year prison sentence for "inciting subversion of state power", passed down in a trial in October 2024. His wife, activist Xu Yan, was sentenced to one year and nine months in prison for the same offense and was released on January 13, 2025.

Yu is being held at a detention center in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. His lawyers have been denied access to him and his case files. Without regular access to lawyers of his choice and verified information about his condition and wellbeing, Yu is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

We urge you to take the following actions in this case:

- Immediately and unconditionally release **Yu Wengsheng**, unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized criminal offense:
- pending his release, allow him regular access to his family and lawyers of his choice and allow use of monies deposited for needed food and clothing items.
- pending his release, we urge that **Yu Wengsheng** is transferred to a prison in Beijing where he is domiciled.
- pending his release, ensure that he has access to adequate medical care, and is are not subject to torture and other ill-treatment.
- Ensure the full freedom of **Xu Yan** and her family, protecting them from any form of harassment or intimidation.

Respectfully yours,