



Amnesty International

Group 524

March 2026



Erosion of Human rights in US Protection of Civilians in the Iran and Ukraine Wars China IAR Case

Welcome

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

Human Rights In The US

The deteriorating state of our human rights and the disrespect of the rule of law in the United States is ongoing with details and a sample letter to Congress on pages 2-3.

Protection of Civilians in the Middle East and Ukraine

Civilians are being targeted and are bearing the brunt of the destruction of the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine. Details and sample letters to Congress are on pages 4-7

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 8-9.

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)



NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW — NOT EVEN THEM

Authoritarian practices are in full swing in the United States and we urgently need your voice: over the past year, we've seen the Trump administration systematically attack the pillars of a free society, punish critics, centralize power, and violate international and federal law.

The chaos is not accidental — it's a tactic. By sidelining the rule of law and concentrating power, the administration is trying to make it impossible for anyone to hold them accountable. **But Congress has the authority — and responsibility — to step in.**



We have seen how this story can end when dissent is punished, oversight is dismantled, and people are disappeared.

ACT NOW: URGE YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO SERVE AS A CHECK ON EXECUTIVE ABUSES, PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS, AND UPHOLD THE RULE OF LAW.



Dear Member of Congress,

I'm writing as a constituent and as a supporter of Amnesty International to express my grave concern over President Trump and his administration's actions.

Over the past year, the United States under the leadership of Trump is showing an alarmingly recognizable pattern of authoritarian tactics and a dangerous erosion of human rights. The Trump administration has systematically attacked the pillars of a free society, violated federal law and encroached upon the authority of Congress – representing grave risks to human rights. Its actions are part of a deliberate strategy to concentrate power and weaken accountability.

Amnesty International's new report, 'Ring the Alarm Bells: Rising Authoritarian Practices and Erosion of Human Rights in the United States', documents 12 patterns of authoritarian tactics in the United States, showing how the administration is eroding freedom of expression, the rule of law, and the civic space that allows all of us to defend our rights.

The chaos is intentional – but Congress has the authority and the responsibility to stop this slide. You must act to uphold the rule of law, protect human rights, and ensure that no one – not even the President – is above the law.

Please do all you can to prevent the normalization of repression and human rights violations. I implore you to swiftly use your legislative power to:

1. Investigate abuses by the executive and hold officials accountable;
2. Protect freedom of the press, protest, and expression from intimidation or interference;
3. Safeguard due process and judicial independence, ensuring fair treatment for all individuals;
4. Defend refugee, asylum seeker, migrant, and marginalized communities from unlawful surveillance, militarization, attacks, and discrimination.

I am gravely concerned that the executive is systematically dismantling key aspects of the federal government that are essential to protecting human rights and taking power away from the people to participate in decision-making through their representatives in Congress.

Congressperson, what happens next depends on your courage and action. Silence and inaction will allow these authoritarian practices to take root – with consequences that could last for decades.

We are watching. We demand accountability.

Sincerely,



PROTECT CIVILIANS IN IRAN AND ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST



Civilians across the Middle East are paying the price for escalating violence following joint U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran and retaliatory Iranian strikes across the region. Schools, hospitals, homes, airports, and prisons have been hit. Hundreds of civilians — including children — have been killed. Entire communities are fleeing and living in fear.

International humanitarian law is clear: direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are prohibited. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks are unlawful. Yet the violence is expanding, and the U.S. is warning that “the hardest hits are yet to come.”

Civilians should never be treated as collateral damage. Their protection must be the top priority — not an afterthought.

Here’s what we’re doing right now — and we will continue to ramp up our work as the situation evolves in real time:

- Investigate and document civilian harm and gather first-hand testimony from eyewitnesses and survivors.
- Verify, analyze, and preserve critical evidence through our Crisis Evidence Lab so violations cannot be erased or denied and can be used to pursue justice and accountability.
- Mobilize international pressure to protect civilians and ensure that all parties to the conflict comply with international law.

Urge Congress: Protect civilians. End unlawful attacks. Protect human life.



Dear Member of Congress,

I am writing as a concerned human rights advocate with Amnesty International to urge you to take immediate action to protect civilians in Iran and across the Middle East.

The escalation of hostilities following joint U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran and the subsequent Iranian retaliatory strikes across the region has already resulted in devastating civilian harm. Schools, medical facilities, residential buildings, airports, and other civilian infrastructure have been damaged or destroyed. Hundreds of civilians, including children, have been killed. Amongst civilians at risk in Iran are detained individuals, including many arrested in connection with Iran's January 2026 uprising, as explosions have taken place near prisons and other facilities where prisoners are held.

International humanitarian law strictly prohibits direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. The United States has clear legal obligations to abide by these laws and to ensure that its actions – and any support it provides - do not contribute to further violations.

I urge you to take immediate steps to ensure the U.S. government:

- Ceases any unlawful attacks that harm civilians
- Ensures full compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law
- Supports independent investigations into civilian deaths and destruction of civilian infrastructure, and holds anyone responsible for violations of international law to account
- Prioritize diplomatic efforts to de-escalate hostilities and prevent further loss of life
- Guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access to affected communities

Civilians must not pay the price for military escalation, and I call on you to do everything you can to protect them.

Sincerely,



ACT NOW: UKRAINIANS ARE SUFFERING

Four years after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, civilians are *still* struggling to survive. Russian forces have targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure, **leaving millions this brutal winter without heat, electricity, or running water.** Families are enduring weeks of blackouts, freezing homes, and nightly air raids.

These attacks are not accidental: Russia isn't just waging a war of aggression against Ukraine, it is subjecting the *entire civilian population* to a campaign of extreme cruelty.

Urge Congress to take bold action to protect Ukrainian civilians. Our lawmakers must do more to work towards a peace agreement that upholds human rights, ensures accountability for Russia's crimes, ends ongoing attacks on civilians, and delivers humanitarian and economic assistance to Ukrainians in urgent need.





Dear Member of Congress,

I write to you as a constituent and supporter of Amnesty International, worried for the health, safety, and human rights of Ukrainians.

As I write, Ukrainians are enduring what many of them have described as the harshest winter they can remember. Russia's intense campaign of aerial attacks against facilities responsible for electricity and heat supply to civilians have undermined the country's capacity to maintain stable, minimal levels of energy and heating. These attacks come amid an unusually cold winter, even by Ukrainian winter standards. Some older people and disabled people cannot leave their rooms on upper floors of apartment blocks and, without elevators, they cannot go up or down. They are effectively locked up in freezing apartments.

An end to the fighting would allow Ukrainians to begin the arduous process of rebuilding critical civilian infrastructure. But a sustainable peace is only possible if all those suspected of human rights violations and war crimes committed during the entirety of the conflict – including high-level officials – are held accountable in fair trial proceedings. Continued impunity for such acts would only encourage additional crimes and human rights violations, setting the stage for renewed armed conflict.

The Ukrainian people who have suffered from Russian aggression have a right to justice, and the United States has an opportunity to ensure that any peace deal upholds human rights. Congress should call on the Trump administration to demand Russia immediately cease its relentless attacks on civilian infrastructure. Congress should also demand accountability for Russia's war of aggression and all other crimes under international law committed since the start of the conflict in 2014, ensure all ongoing human rights violations in the course of the conflict end, and support the provision of assistance to those who have lost or stand to lose the most as a result of the conflict.

I care deeply about this issue and will be watching my members of Congress's actions closely.

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,