



ACTION GUIDE: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE 2022 US ELECTION

VOTE LIKE YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS DEPEND ON IT

Amnesty International USA is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3), international human rights organization registered in New York. AIUSA neither supports nor opposes any political party or any candidate for public office. Amnesty International does not seek to influence elections.

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Introduction

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Dear Amnesty Activist,

The charged atmosphere of an election brings with it unique challenges and opportunities for human rights organizations like Amnesty International. The US Congress has the capacity for enormous human rights impact, both positive and negative.

Amnesty International does not take a position for or against any candidate for office, but we do believe that all people elected to the US Congress must respect, protect and fulfill human rights here at home and around the world. Amnesty International believes that human rights are universal, and binding obligations that we expect any government to prioritize in its foreign and domestic policy.

Amnesty activists can vote and raise the profile of human rights in public discourse, while keeping out of the partisan politics of election campaigns.

This 2022 Elections Toolkit will provide:

- Clear guidelines on what Amnesty representatives (including AIUSA local and student groups) can and cannot do in relation to the 2022 elections.
- Resource materials
- Action ideas for raising human rights during this election season

Thank you for taking action for human rights!

Vienna Colucci
Senior Director, Policy, Amnesty International USA



Important Things to Remember When Representing Amnesty

Amnesty International is a non-partisan human rights organization that neither supports nor opposes any political party, candidate, government, or political ideology. As a matter of organization-wide policy, Amnesty International does not seek to influence elections.

Because Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) is classified as a “public charity” -- 501(c)(3) -- by the Internal Revenue Service, there are restrictions on the organization’s activities in relation to elections and partisan political activities. A 501(c)(3) may encourage civic participation and educate the public and candidates about its issues but may not directly or indirectly tell people who to vote for and/or who to oppose or support.

Here are some guidelines to help you navigate these restrictions and carry out your Amnesty work.

- **Do not oppose or support candidates while acting in AIUSA’s name.** This includes both explicit and implicit opposition or endorsement of candidates. If someone can potentially infer from your message, post, tweet, graphic, etc. that you support or oppose a candidate, this is problematic and harmful to our organization, as it violates our non-profit legal status in the United States. When representing Amnesty International, you cannot attack or approve of candidates’ positions.
- **Emphasize AIUSA’s impartiality.** For 61 years, Amnesty International has worked to protect human rights in countries around the world in a nonpartisan way. When engaging with candidates or the public, be sure to clarify that AIUSA is a nonpartisan organization that does not support or oppose any political candidate or party.
- **Clarify our nonpartisan approach.** Use this disclaimer in any Amnesty International materials distributed in the context of elections: “Amnesty International USA is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3), international human rights organization registered in New York. AIUSA neither supports nor opposes any political party or any candidate for public office. Amnesty International does not seek to influence elections.”
- **Keep your personal political views separate from opinions or statements made in your official AIUSA capacity.** If you maintain an account on social media that identifies you as a representative of Amnesty International, that account should reflect the positions of the organization and should not contain partisan or election-related information. If you wish to represent AIUSA on social media, then you should have a dedicated Amnesty-affiliated account that is distinct from your personal account. You should not post, tweet, retweet, or share anything through your AIUSA account that suggests the organization endorses or opposes candidates for public office. You are free to engage in political activities in your personal capacity, as long as these actions do not give the impression that they represent the organization’s views, and as long as you do not use AIUSA resources to do so (e.g., an AIUSA computer, laptop, mobile device or phone, printer or from an AIUSA office). When attending AIUSA events, do not wear partisan political items that support or oppose candidates currently running for office. For example, if a staff member/volunteer acting in their organizational capacity is attending an AIUSA rally or briefing, they should not wear



buttons, t-shirts, hats, or other items that demonstrate their support for a particular political party or candidate.

- **Do not use your AIUSA-branded social media pages to support or oppose a candidate, and do not act in the name of Amnesty in support of or opposition to candidates (i.e., campaigning, volunteering, partisan voter registration, etc.).** You are free, of course, to support a candidate or political party in your private capacity as an individual, but do not wear AIUSA branded identifiers while you volunteer for a candidate or engage in other partisan political activities. You should make it clear that you are speaking/acting in your personal capacity and not for the organization when participating in partisan activities outside of your Amnesty work.
- **All candidates in an election must be treated equally by a 501(c)(3) organization.** What you do for one candidate, you must do for all. We pose our questions to candidates of all political parties (and we do not evaluate, edit, or comment on candidates' responses.) If we wish to invite a candidate to a public forum, we must invite all participating candidates in a specific election.
- **Maintain a wide scope of issues.** AIUSA is not a single-issue organization, and we have an interest in hearing candidates' views on a wide range of human rights issues. Spotlighting one issue or a narrow range of issues that distinguish candidates may be perceived as a partisan litmus test of support or opposition.
- **Do not seek pledges from candidates.** Regulations prohibit public charities, like Amnesty International, from asking candidates to promise to support a particular issue if elected. In other words, do not ask questions that can only be answered with yes/no or questions that imply a correct answer. Instead, ask open-ended questions that give candidates the ability to explain their position on an issue.
- **Ask, but do not debate.** Town halls and debates are a good opportunity to highlight the issues we care about. We can ask candidates at an open forum what their views are on a particular human rights issue, but do not comment on their response or seek to debate with them in your AIUSA capacity. Opposing or supporting a candidate's answers could be seen as intervening in an election.
- **Err on the side of caution.** If you draft a letter to the editor regarding a candidate's positions, endorse a candidate, post criticism or approval of a candidate via social media, attend a candidate event/fundraiser, or otherwise engage in partisan political activity during an election, it should be clear that you are doing so in your personal capacity, not as a representative of AIUSA. This policy applies to members, volunteers, interns, staff, and board members. Any bio, byline or identifying information should not include your role/capacity at AIUSA. High-profile, senior level staff and/or board members who may not be seen separately from their roles at Amnesty should refrain from partisan political activity that could be attributed to AIUSA.



AIUSA Guidance for Members on Upcoming Election Activities

Posting commentary/criticism on social media

If tweeting/posting from personal - non-AIUSA account, may criticize or comment on candidates' positions.

Permissible: Co-group member tweets from personal account that does not include AIUSA in bio: "When is (Candidate) going to address the issues in his own backyard? How can we expect him to address criminal justice issues nationwide when he can't get a handle on his own city?"

Not permissible: AIUSA Local Group 35 tweets from account that includes (Local Group @AIUSA) in bio: "AIUSA groups know that (Candidate) is the only qualified candidate for the Senate. She stands for women's rights and agrees with AIUSA's stance on a woman's right to choose (insert link)"

Using hashtags and/or links to other websites

If using hashtags and/or sharing links to other websites that include partisan election-related material, must be from personal, non-AIUSA account—with no AIUSA brand identifiers.

Permissible: Military, Security & Police Co-Group member shares message/video statement from (Candidate) on importance of restrictions on export of guns abroad on Instagram from personal account.

Not permissible: AIUSA Student Group from UNC Chapel Hill uses AIUSA Student Group Facebook page to invite students to (Candidate) rally on campus - links to Campaign event and fundraising page. #BlueNoMatterWho

Registering people to vote

Voter registration is permissible but must be nonpartisan and not specifically identify a preferred candidate or political party. We cannot tell people who to vote for or which party to support when volunteering with or working for AIUSA.

2022 Election: Answering Potential Questions

Which candidate does Amnesty International support?

Amnesty International is a non-partisan organization that neither supports nor opposes any candidate in any election.

Surely one candidate supports your organization's positions more strongly than the other. From that standpoint, which candidate is better suited to move forward Amnesty International's objectives?

Regardless of who is elected to Congress, Amnesty International will engage with the government to move our human rights agenda forward in the U.S. and around the world.



Is it fair to say that candidates from one party are going to be easier for you to work with than the other? You will have a more sympathetic ear, right?

Clearly, there are differences of opinion among the candidates on a number of issues. But regardless of who is in the next Congress, Amnesty International will continue to push our human rights agenda forward.

How about Amnesty International supporters and members? Clearly, they must support one candidate or party over another?

Individual Amnesty International members, like all other private citizens, can support whomever they wish. Their views on the elections are their own, and not the position of Amnesty International, and Amnesty International neither supports nor opposes any candidate or political party.

Human Rights Actions in Election Season

1) Vote. We our voting like our human rights depend on it. Join us!

We value freedom, justice and equality and believe a better world IS possible. We call on all candidates and elected officials to respect these human rights on the line and all others:

- The right to abortion and the right to make choices about your own body
- The right to live free from gun violence, including at the polls
- The rights of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers
- The right to be free from white supremacist discrimination and hate
- The right to protest against human rights abuses
- And so many more, here at home and around the world.

2) Register people to vote (but do not tell people who to vote for or register them to vote for a particular outcome on an issue)

3) Engage in Congressional Recess Town Halls

During various weeks throughout the year, Congress goes “on recess,” meaning that Congress is out of session and Members of Congress (MOCs) go home to their districts. MOCs use this time to connect with their constituents. Many of them will hold local town halls or forums (some virtually) to discuss issues that concern their constituents. These events are important for organizations like Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) to show our policymakers that the people they represent are concerned about human rights issues. This is a critical moment in persuading Members of Congress to take action on the issues we all fight for every day. [Use AIUSA’s 2022 Virtual Town Hall Toolkit to engage effectively.](#)

4) Demand governors ban guns at polls. Use our online tool to send a letter to your governor. Email campaigns@aiusa.org for the link.

5) Other Actions

- **Engage the media** by writing letters to the editor of your local news publications, or submit an article to your community paper (including school papers and newsletters), using a recent news hook to draw attention to the human rights questions you want to focus on. Use this the letter to the editor guide linked to in the [2022 Virtual Town Hall Toolkit](#) to take action.



- **Utilize social media to send your questions directly to MOCs** or other elected officials via their website, Facebook, or Twitter page. Organize a Twitterstorm by using an original hashtag and engage people to use this hashtag to spike activity around a specific question that is being asked of the candidate.
- **Organize a Town Hall on campus or in your community (if you feel comfortable given COVID-19).** Invite candidates to attend and provide them with the opportunity to discuss some of the major human rights concerns that have been identified by Amnesty. Be sure to invite all candidates to reflect Amnesty's non-partisan nature. Invite a student or faculty leader, or a local celebrity (who you can confirm will handle it impartially) to moderate. Please follow CDC Guidance on COVID-19.
- **Classroom discussions provide space for learning, discussion, and reflection (if you feel comfortable given COVID-19).** The goal is to get people involved and heighten self-awareness around the Midterm Elections. As an Amnesty student group, you could serve as a non-partisan moderator and invite your school political affiliation groups to an "Human Rights 2022 Town Hall Forum" and through this simulation you can ask groups to come prepared to represent how their party's candidate would respond to human rights concerns that are asked of them. Please follow CDC Guidance on COVID-19.
- **Table (if you feel comfortable given COVID-19)** at your school or in a public space in your community to educate people with information about the human rights concerns that have been identified by Amnesty for the elections. Please follow CDC Guidance on COVID-19.
- **Postcard Action** focused on sending questions about human rights concerns to all congressional candidates in your state and district. Be a human rights influencer and make sure candidates are forced to confront human rights concerns such as abortion, gun violence and ensuring people seeking safety in this country are not locked up in detention centers! Use postcards from your city to send to all candidates. When you sign the postcard let them know who you are and where you are from. Share one thing you want them to know that will help them to understand why you care about this issue. Keep it brief and respectful and help us to get the message out to candidates that these are human rights concerns that we want action on! (See list of issues here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/11xav78Ja6Xn5EtoBKOMSnhVf1sjpo9GaFgIPUTfyNa4/edit>)

6) Take and share issue-based actions:

- Fight for abortion rights: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/abortiontoolkit/>
- End gun violence: <https://heroes.amnestyusa.org/>
- Help Afghan refugees seeking safety
https://act.amnestyusa.org/page/89177/action/1?ea.tracking.id=Welcome.US&supporter.appealCode=W2109WCEUR&en_og_source=W2109WCEUR
- Support human rights defenders by joining Write for Rights starting November 1st at write.amnestyusa.org
- Stop human rights abuses by ICE <https://www.amnestyusa.org/campaigns/freethemnow/>

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



Human Rights Questions for Candidates

Please refer to the 2022 Virtual Town Hall Toolkit for the list of questions:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11xav78Ja6Xn5EtoBKOMSnhVf1sjpo9GaFgIPUTfyNa4/edit>

Contact Us

Email campaigns@aiusa.org