



WORLD ANTI EXTREMISM
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UNCENSORED WATCH

Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and Authoritarianism

Issue 13 | January 2026



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Issue:

Uncensored Watch | Issue 13, January 2026

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SECTION - 1

Welcome to Uncensored Watch - A Project of
World Anti-Extremism Network



Welcome to Uncensored Watch - A Project of
World Anti-Extremism Network

Hello, Dear Readers, and welcome to the January edition of Uncensored Watch.

We're grateful to have you with us as we review the events of January. This month's edition brings together urgent reports on state repression, human rights violations, political violence, and the shrinking space for democratic participation. From the silencing of journalists and activists to the suppression of dissent and the targeting of marginalized communities, these stories reflect the growing challenges to human rights, justice, and accountability worldwide.

Alongside our news coverage, this issue features research presented at the Toronto Democracy Forum, examining civil resistance, authoritarianism, and pathways to democratic renewal. These studies highlight how communities, youth movements, and diaspora groups continue to advocate for justice and reform despite mounting pressure.

This issue goes beyond information, it calls for reflection, engagement, and action. By reading and sharing these insights, you contribute to strengthening democratic principles, elevating marginalized voices, and supporting the global struggle for justice and dignity.

As always, Uncensored Watch remains steadfast in its mission to document critical stories, elevate unheard voices, and ensure that violations are seen, recorded, and remembered.

Until next month,
The Uncensored Watch Team



SECTION - 2

Global Crisis in Focus

UN Expert Calls for Release of Detained Afghan Female Journalist and Sports Coach Amid Taliban Crackdown.

A United Nations human rights expert has urged the Taliban authorities to immediately release [a female Afghan journalist and a taekwondo coach](#) who were detained under unclear circumstances, warning that their arrests highlight the deepening repression of women under Taliban rule. The call comes amid growing alarm that Afghan women who remain active in public life are being systematically silenced through intimidation, detention, and enforced disappearance.

Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, said he was seriously concerned about the fate of the two women, noting that no clear charges have been made public and that access to legal representation remains uncertain. According to rights groups, such secrecy has become common in Taliban detentions, particularly those involving women.

Since returning to power in August 2021, the Taliban have imposed sweeping restrictions on women and girls, dismantling decades of progress. Girls have been barred from secondary schools and universities, women have been pushed out of most jobs, and strict rules governing dress, movement, and public behavior have been enforced. Women working in media, sports, education, and civil society have been especially vulnerable. Journalists and athletes once represented visible signs of women's participation in Afghan society. Today, those same roles have become liabilities. Female journalists have been removed from newsrooms or forced into silence, while women's sports programs have largely collapsed. Coaches and athletes who once trained girls are now viewed with suspicion, accused of violating Taliban interpretations of morality and social order.

Human rights experts say the detentions violate Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law, including protections for freedom of expression, due process, and gender equality. Although the Taliban are not internationally recognized, they remain bound by fundamental legal norms. The lack of an independent judiciary and the absence of oversight raise serious concerns about arbitrary detention and the risk of abuse. The United Nations has repeatedly warned that Taliban policies targeting women may amount to gender persecution, which can constitute a crime under international law. Despite this, Taliban officials continue to dismiss international criticism as interference, insisting that their policies align with cultural and religious values.

Rights advocates argue that the international community has so far failed to translate condemnation into meaningful protection. They are calling for coordinated action that goes beyond statements, including diplomatic pressure, targeted sanctions, and accountability mechanisms. Without stronger measures, they warn, [Afghan women who continue to resist erasure](#) by working, speaking, or coaching will remain at grave risk.



Photo by Nada on Unsplash

Arrest of Foreign Journalist in Türkiye Raises Alarms Over Press Freedom and Shrinking Civic Space

The arrest of a [foreign journalist](#) in Türkiye while covering a public protest has sparked renewed concern over press freedom, arbitrary detention, and the steady narrowing of civic space in the country. The journalist, who has lived and worked legally in Türkiye for years, was detained during demonstrations and later transferred to a migrant detention facility, prompting fears of possible deportation. Human rights and press freedom organizations say the case reflects a broader trend in which journalism is increasingly criminalized, particularly when it involves protests, opposition movements, Kurdish rights, or state security issues. Despite holding valid press credentials, journalists covering sensitive topics have faced surveillance, harassment, legal cases, and detention.

The use of migration law in this case has drawn particular concern. Advocates argue that transferring a journalist to a migrant detention center without clear criminal charges bypasses judicial safeguards and undermines due process. It also sends a warning to foreign reporters that legal residency offers little protection when reporting challenges official narratives. Türkiye has long struggled with press freedom. [Following the failed coup attempt in 2016](#), emergency laws and broad counterterrorism legislation were used to justify mass arrests and closures of media outlets. While some emergency measures have since ended, rights groups say the legal framework continues to enable repression.

According to Reporters Without Borders, Türkiye consistently ranks among the countries with the highest number of imprisoned journalists. Many face lengthy pretrial detention or legal harassment that can last years, even when cases ultimately collapse.

International law protects the right of journalists to gather and report information, especially during public demonstrations. Press freedom advocates stress that detaining journalists undermines not only individual rights but also the public's right to know. When reporters are silenced, accountability weakens and abuses are more likely to go unchecked. The case has attracted diplomatic attention, with foreign governments and international organizations urging Türkiye to respect its obligations under human rights treaties it has ratified.

Critics warn that continued pressure on independent media risks deepening democratic backsliding and further damaging Türkiye's international standing. For journalists working in the country, the message is increasingly clear. Reporting the news, even lawfully, carries growing personal and professional risks in an environment where security and migration laws are routinely used to silence scrutiny.



Photo by Joppe Spaa on Unsplash



LGBTQ Ugandans Face Intensified Targeting Ahead of National Elections

LGBTQ communities in Uganda are facing an [*increasingly hostile environment as the country moves closer to national elections*](#), with activists and rights groups warning that discriminatory laws are being used to silence dissent and restrict political participation. What should be a period of civic engagement has instead become a time of fear, exclusion, and intensified persecution for sexual and gender minorities.



Central to the crackdown is [*Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act*](#), legislation widely condemned by international human rights organizations as one of the harshest in the world. Authorities have reportedly relied on the law to justify surveillance, arrests, and restrictions on public gatherings, creating a climate in which LGBTQ people are treated as security threats rather than citizens with rights. Activists say the law has emboldened both state authorities and private individuals to harass and intimidate LGBTQ Ugandans with near total impunity. Human rights groups report that political rhetoric has played a major role in escalating hostility. In the lead-up to elections, accusations of “promoting homosexuality” have been used as a political weapon to discredit opposition figures and activists. This language, frequently echoed by officials and media outlets, has fueled stigma and moral panic, placing LGBTQ individuals at heightened risk of harassment, violence, and arbitrary detention.

Since the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, rights organizations have documented a rise in arrests, forced evictions, and physical attacks against LGBTQ people. Many victims report that police either fail to intervene or are directly involved in abuse. As a result, LGBTQ Ugandans increasingly avoid public spaces, political rallies, and even polling stations, fearing that visibility could lead to arrest or violence. This exclusion effectively denies them meaningful participation in the electoral process. Observers argue that the targeting of LGBTQ communities reflects a broader pattern of authoritarian governance in Uganda. Minority rights, they say, are routinely sacrificed to mobilize conservative support and distract from pressing economic challenges, corruption allegations, and governance failures. By framing LGBTQ people as a moral threat, critics argue, authorities are able to consolidate power while narrowing civic space and suppressing dissent.

International law guarantees equal political participation without discrimination. Uganda is a party to multiple human rights treaties that protect freedom of expression, association, and the right to take part in public affairs. Rights advocates warn that the current climate violates these obligations and raises serious doubts about the credibility of elections held under such conditions. Activists caution that the consequences of the current repression will extend far beyond the election period. Driving LGBTQ communities underground erodes trust in public

institutions, entrenches inequality, and normalizes violence against marginalized groups.

Human rights organizations are urging the Ugandan government to repeal discriminatory legislation, protect vulnerable communities, and ensure that elections take place in an environment free from intimidation and coercion. Without meaningful reform, they warn, elections risk becoming instruments of exclusion rather than genuine expressions of democratic choice.

China Threatens Detention Over Uyghur Songs in Xinjiang

Authorities in China's Xinjiang region have escalated their crackdown on Uyghur cultural expression, now targeting traditional songs that have been part of the community's heritage for decades. Reports indicate that residents can face detention, fines, or other punishments simply for downloading, playing, sharing, or storing certain [Uyghur](#) songs on their phones, computers, or social media platforms.

Among the songs flagged by authorities is the popular traditional track Besh pede, along with a number of other melodies considered politically sensitive. Officials have reportedly issued warnings that anyone found with these songs could be sent to prison, marking a new phase in the region's ongoing cultural repression. While the measures focus on music, they are part of a broader effort to control Uyghur language, religion, and traditional practices, including greetings and phrases commonly used in everyday life. Many of these have been replaced in schools and workplaces with state-approved political slogans.



According to interviews with former Xinjiang residents and legal documents obtained by human rights organizations, some Uyghurs have already been detained for music-related offenses. One case involved a Uyghur music producer who was sentenced to three years in prison and fined for maintaining a collection of banned songs. Other residents have faced administrative detention for simply sharing traditional tunes among friends and family. Such actions are viewed by rights groups as an extension of a broader, systematic effort to suppress Uyghur culture, which has been ongoing for several years.

Experts say the campaign against Uyghur music is a strategy of cultural assimilation and political control in Xinjiang. Over the past decade, Chinese authorities have implemented a [range of policies](#) aimed at reducing the influence of Islam and Uyghur heritage, including mass surveillance, restrictions on religious practices, and the so-called “re-education” programs. The targeting of music marks a particularly personal intrusion into daily life, as songs have historically been an integral part of family celebrations, festivals, and religious observances.

International human rights organizations have expressed alarm over these developments. The United Nations and advocacy groups such as Amnesty International have repeatedly documented detention, forced labor, and surveillance in Xinjiang, warning that measures like music bans further entrench systemic human rights abuses. Cultural repression not only threatens individual freedoms but also undermines the survival of the Uyghur language and traditions for future generations.

For residents, the social impact is immediate. Families are reportedly removing music files from devices, avoiding certain social media platforms, and self-censoring conversations to avoid attracting the attention of authorities. This environment of fear has contributed to a broader sense of psychological pressure and uncertainty in the region, with many Uyghurs feeling that even minor expressions of their culture could carry severe consequences.

While Chinese authorities defend their policies as necessary for security and stability, critics argue that the suppression of traditional songs is a clear violation of cultural and human rights. Continued international attention is crucial to documenting abuses and advocating for the protection of Uyghur heritage. The crackdown on Uyghur songs is a stark reminder of the fragile state of cultural freedom in Xinjiang, where even simple acts of listening to music can carry grave risks.



Photo by Kuzzat Altay on Unsplash

U.S. Military Action in Venezuela; An Open Attack on Sovereignty.

Washington's dramatic [*military operation in Venezuela*](#) has ignited intense debate across capitals, international institutions, and human rights circles about the future of global norms, state sovereignty, and the rule of international law. At the very start of this year, United States launched a sustained military strike to the Venezuelan territory to capture and remove the Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores. In their defense, the U.S Government referred to this act a necessary effort to dismantle "narcoterrorism". However, it has been widely condemned as an unlawful use of force that with little regard for foundational principles of national sovereignty.

The UN Charter's Article 2(4) unequivocally prohibits member states from resorting to force against the territorial integrity or political independence of another state, except in the cases of narrowly defined self-defense scenarios or with Security Council authorization. The case of Venezuela is a clear, if not blatant, breach of the International Law. Intervening in a sovereign state's internal politics and challenging its authority figures without a legitimate reason is a demonstration of not just U.S. hegemony, but also a New World Order where only the most powerful get to call the shots.

Critics of the intervention warn that such actions not only violate international law but also set a dangerous precedent that could encourage further abuses by powerful states. Amnesty

International, in a public statement, described the strikes and subsequent seizure of Venezuela's head of state as a deepening collapse of international legal norms and expressed grave concerns about how the violence might exacerbate human rights abuses within Venezuela. The organization also highlighted the risk that military coercion, rather than diplomacy and dialogue, are normalized in international relations, threatening the rights and freedoms of populations caught in geopolitical conflicts.

At the United Nations Security Council, the controversy has underscored deep divisions among member states. Countries such as Russia and Colombia condemned the U.S. action as a breach of international law and a threat to global peace and security, emphasizing that respect for sovereignty and non-interference is essential to upholding democratic principles and the equal rights of nations. Meanwhile, some Western diplomats have given their criticism in more cautious language, affirming the importance of the rule of law while [*refraining from directly labeling the U.S. intervention illegal.*](#)

The debate also touches on the fragile state of Venezuelan democracy. The Maduro government's legitimacy was already contested after a series of disputed elections and widespread allegations of repression and corruption. Yet many legal scholars argue that political dysfunction, however severe, does not justify external military intervention in absence of clear legal authorization. They believe that such acts impede democratic evolution and will only disenfranchise the Venezuelan people by placing external, non-state actors in their place for handling domestic political processes. The impact of the conflict on civilians who have endured years of economic hardship, political repression, and displacement must remain central to any political action. There should be renewed diplomatic efforts driven by tenets of the international law, democracy, and most importantly, respect for human rights to address Venezuela's humanitarian and democratic crisis.

U.S has a history of pushing through with its unilateral foreign policy motives, and recent adventure has only added to the already existing criticism. This incident reflects a broader erosion of the post-World War II rules-based order, which was designed to restrain unilateral military adventurism and uphold peaceful dispute resolution. As the world watches the fallout from the Venezuelan operation, the central questions remain: Can international law withstand unilateral military interventions by powerful states? And will democracy, human rights, and freedom be upheld in a system where might increasingly appears to override legal norms?

UN Human Rights Chief Urges Iranian Authorities to End Violent Repression Amid Nationwide Protests.



Photo by Teemu Paananen on Unsplash

In early January 2026, the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) issued an urgent appeal to Iranian authorities to end the violent repression of massive nationwide protests, warning that the state's response to dissent violated core human rights threatened the democratic rights of Iranian citizens. The High Commissioner described the mounting violence with "horror" and called for accountability, transparency, and dialogue to address the underlying drivers of unrest. The protests, which began on 28 December 2025, initially emerged in Tehran and other cities in response to growing economic turmoil marked by soaring inflation, currency collapse, and waning living conditions. Demonstrations quickly accelerated into broad, nationwide, anti-government campaign where people across provinces participated, calling for the necessary political and economic reforms.

This civil unrest has rapidly become the [largest sustained movement since the 2022](#) protests which were triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini, who died while in custody of the infamous morality police. Iranian security forces have responded with brutal, unswerving, and often indiscriminate violence. Reports indicate the use of live ammunition, heavy machine guns, and other lethal tools of force against primarily peaceful demonstrators. Independent accounts from NGOs monitoring the situation indicate thousands have been killed and tens of thousands arrested, although the exact figures remained difficult to verify because of a nationwide communications blackout imposed by the government authorities. The Iranian government restricted access to internet and other forms of mobile communication to levels close to total blackouts, severely limiting the flow of information. This can be driven by a motive to hinder efforts to document human rights violations in real time, along with its main purpose of disrupting network of protestors. UN human rights officials emphasized that such shutdowns violate the right to access information, silence civil society, and obstruct independent verification of abuses.

At the heart of the UN's appeal is the principle that peaceful protest is a fundamental human right enshrined in international law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees freedom of peaceful assembly, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran has ratified, protects individuals' rights to expression and assembly without fear of reaction. The UN also highlighted that states must act with restraint and proportionality when confronted with public protests, and any use of force must first be met with strict legal standards. Spectators, and concerned international authorities' officials have repeatedly called for independent investigations into alleged killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, and other abuses subjected by the Iranian government on their citizens. They urge that those responsible for human rights abuses should be brought to justice as policed by the International Law. The UN Security Council also held discussions on the crisis, with several member states condemning the widespread use of force and advocating for the use of restraint, and peaceful solutions to unrest. Some governments, including members of the European Union, issued statements against the violence and urge Iran to respect the rights of its citizens to protest and participate in political life. Resolutions and sanctions targeting individuals and entities associated with the crackdown have been proposed, with some states suggesting extreme international intervention to hold control of the situation. Iranian authorities frame this unrest as foreign interference, while some senior leaders publicly labeled protesters as "rioters" or "terrorists." Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei acknowledged that thousands had died during the unrest but attributes the violence to internal disorder and influence from external powers. Despite such claims, political analysts stress that

economic grievances and longstanding demands for political reform are the main reasons behind driving people into the streets. They further argue that suppressing public dissent through force has countereffects on the state of stability, and Iran can extinguish the upheaval through democratic means only.

The situation in Iran is not just a case of domestic civil distraught; it has broader implications on the state of democracy all over the world. Furthermore, this leads Iran into an era of imbalance, where internal conflicts can create a power vacuum for international adversaries to compete for control. Iran can risk exacerbated tensions at home and beyond, if it holds on to the status quo and does not make the necessary reforms for the betterment of its people.

Ugandan Elections; A Moment of Victory for Tyranny.

As Uganda held its January 15, 2026, general election, there were [widespread reports of repression](#), arbitrary detentions, internet shutdowns, and violent crackdowns on opposition supporters. This raised deep concerns about the legitimacy of the elections, challenging the democratic essence of electoral process. Rights organizations, and local civil society groups described this as an election campaign being conducted under the atmosphere of fear and intimidation, impacting the impartiality of free and fair participation. This led to the reelection of President Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986, who was declared winner with approximately 71% of the vote, extending his rule into a [seventh term](#). His main rival was the opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, popularly known as Bobi Wine, who only secured around 24% of ballots. Wine rejected the result as fraudulent and illegitimate, attributing the winning of Museveni to fear mongering and repressive tactics used before the election to influence public decision.

Bobi Wine is a former musician who turned political figure who advocates extensive reforms to restore human rights and justice, along with anti-corruption measures. He believes that ballot stuffing, intimidation, and widespread irregularities contributed to the overall result, as they were being observed throughout the electoral process.

Leading up to the vote, Amnesty International documented a “brutal campaign of repression” targeting opposition supporters, activists, civil society members, journalists, and public defenders. Uganda’s security forces were accused of using unforeseen excessive force, arbitrary arrests, beatings, and torture to disrupt rallies and suppress dissent, with hundreds detained and denied access to the due process of election. Authorities also imposed sweeping restrictions on information during this critical democratic moment. The Uganda Communications Commission ordered a blanket internet shutdown nationwide two days before election day, limiting access to social media, messaging applications, and online news. Human Rights Watch, characterized the shutdown as a severe violation of fundamental freedoms of expression, access to information, and transparency essential for credible elections. International law recognizes these rights as indispensable to democratic participation.

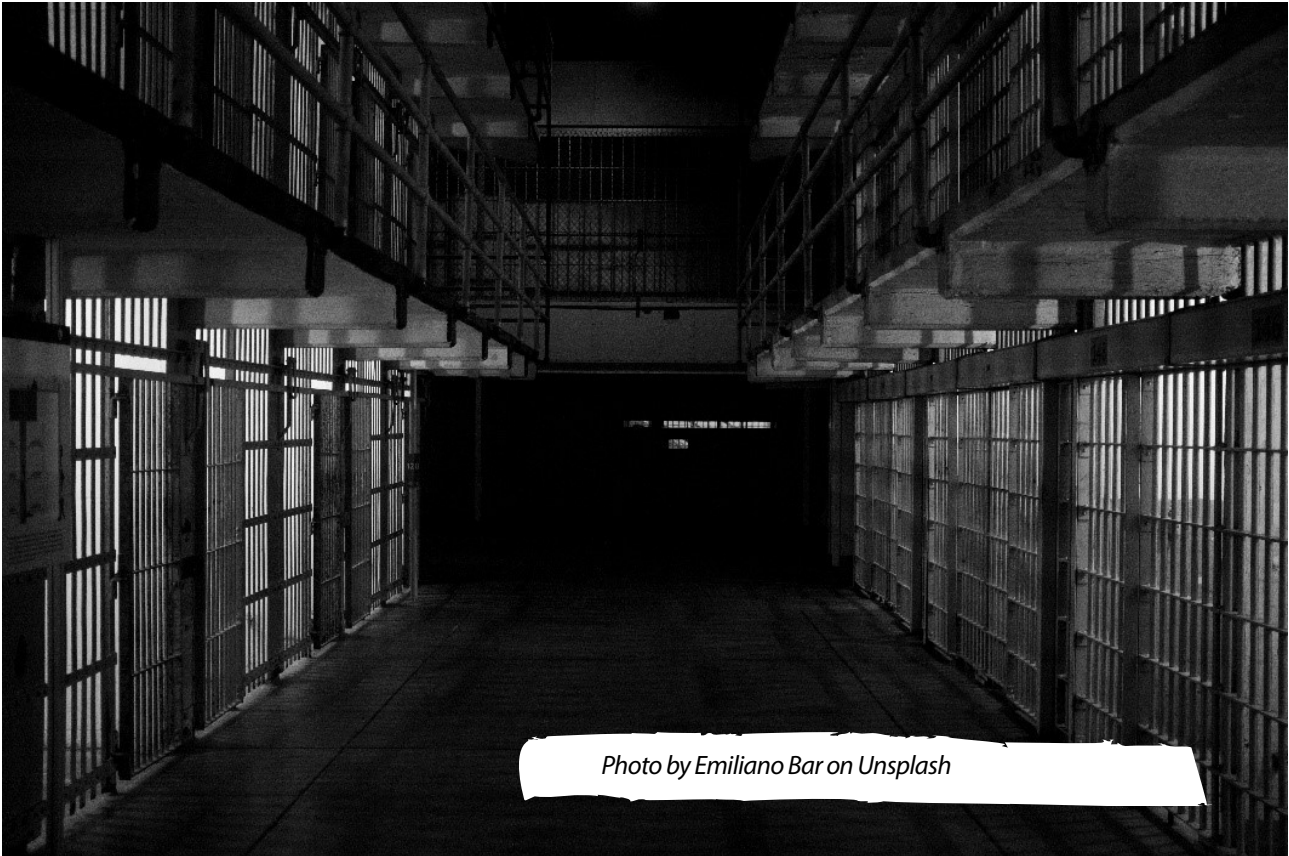
The government further banned live broadcasting of protests, riots, and “unlawful processions,” excusing it as a concern of misinformation and public order. Critics, however, said the ban effectively restricted independent reporting on civil unrest and masked abuse by state actors. Moreover, suspension of several local NGOs, including rights monitoring groups and journalist networks, immediately before the election further eroded civic space at a moment when monitoring and accountability were most needed. Such restrictions on information flow and accountability limit transparency and inhibit voters’ ability to make informed choices.

The United Nations Human Rights Office had earlier highlighted an “atmosphere of widespread repression and intimidation” across the country. Reports included allegations that security forces transported individuals to unofficial detention centers, sometimes under enforced disappearance, raising serious concerns about torture, ill-treatment, and arbitrary detention. In the aftermath of the vote, more than 100 opposition supporters were formally charged with offenses such as unlawful assembly and conspiracy, according to court documents and party officials. Many of those charged were claimed by the National Unity Platform (NUP) to have been legitimate polling agents or peaceful participants. Prominent opposition figure Kizza Besigye, who challenged Museveni multiple times in previous elections, remained in detention with his health reportedly deteriorating. His incarceration on charges including treason, denounced by supporters as politically motivated, raised additional concerns about the use of legal systems to sideline political opposition.

The 2026 election in Uganda thus stands as a pivotal moment in the country’s political trajectory, one marked not by a celebration of democratic choice but by profound debate over the meaning of legitimate governance, respect for democratic processes, and the space for dissent in modern African politics.



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Israeli Rights Group Report Says Prison Conditions Amount to Systemic Abuse and “Torture Camps”.

A new report by the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem has added to the mistrust in Israeli Government after concluding that conditions in [Israeli detention facilities](#) holding Palestinian prisoners uphold widespread and systematic abuse. The group has termed these prisons as “torture camps”, that have subjected Palestinian prisoners to unending mental and physical abuse. Israel has been facing long-standing criticism on its treatment of detainees in the context of the ongoing conflict, now turned into a violent war crime motivated by ethnic and imperialist motivations. It has again shown disregard for compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law.

Titled Living Hell, the report is an updated follow-up to earlier documentation that described prison conditions as constituting “de facto torture camps.” It draws on interviews with Palestinians released in a prisoner exchange during the October 2025 ceasefire, as well as data from multiple sources that have gathered and covered the situation of human rights abuses by Israel. According to [B’Tselem](#), the evidence indicates systemic, institutionalized cruelty across Israel’s detention system. B’Tselem’s findings describe a pattern of physical abuse, sexual violence, deliberate starvation, denial of medical care, severe overcrowding, and inhumane living conditions affecting thousands of Palestinian detainees. Former prisoners reported repeated beatings, humiliation, shackling, isolation, sleep deprivation, and denial of contact with family. Some gave testimony of sexual violence as part of broader mistreatment.

The report says that at least 84 Palestinians died in detention between October 2023 and early 2026 under conditions that remain undisclosed, with forces withholding most bodies from

families and restricting independent examinations. That figure is based on cases that could be independently verified; warning that the actual number could be even higher.

The number of Palestinian detainees held in Israeli prisons has increased significantly since the revival of war in October 2023. Reports from Palestinian prisoner advocacy groups suggest thousands are currently held, with a substantial proportion detained without proof of charge under administrative detention policies that allow prolonged imprisonment without trial. Many detainees are held far from their homes, contrary to the preferences of the families, undermining compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protections of civilians in times of conflict. Among those detained at the time of the report were women and hundreds of minors, some of whom are held in facilities widely described as lacking basic protections. Reports from Palestinian Prisoners' Society and other advocates contend that female detainees have faced gender-based abuse, medical neglect, and degrading treatment.

Israeli Authorities reject the claims by these reports, with the Israel Prison Service and government spokespeople stating that their detention practices comply with Israeli law and that allegations are examined through official channels. In its brief response, the prison service emphasized that complaints are reviewed and that the institution is to be evaluated for testing the validity of these reports.

International law, including the Convention against Torture (which prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment under all circumstances) and the Fourth Geneva Convention (which protects detainees from maltreatment during conflict) has set clear standards for the humane treatment of individuals deprived of liberty. Legal experts and rights advocates argue that the patterns documented in the B'Tselem report, if accurate, would constitute breaches of these norms. The findings arrive against the backdrop of a conflict marked by deep divisions and repeated allegations of rights violations. The report's publication has reignited calls for independent, impartial investigations into prisoner treatment and for Israel to uphold its obligations under international law.

As the fallout from the report spreads across circles, core concerns center around transparency, legal accountability, and the protection of fundamental rights. It is noteworthy that Israel has previously breached a number of legal, moral, and international standards of conduct. This report lights up one of the many corners of the country's extensively defined acts of "self-defense", which are becoming increasingly questionable and hard to defend.

Minneapolis ICE Shooting Sparks Public Outrage About Law Enforcement Accountability and Civil Rights.



The fatal shooting of [Renee Nicole Good](#), a 37-year-old U.S. citizen, by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in Minneapolis has reignited a nationwide debate over law enforcement accountability, the use of force, and the protection of civil liberties within democratic societies. The incident, as shown in widespread footages from multiple angles, shows an ICE agent shooting the woman multiple times in broad daylight after a heated confrontation about the ongoing arrests of undocumented immigrants. According to initial statements from federal authorities, ICE agents were conducting an operation related to immigration enforcement when the encounter escalated, resulting in the shooting of Good. Officials initially suggested that the agent acted in self-defense. However, subsequent independent autopsy findings indicated that Good was shot multiple times, including in the back, casting doubt on the official account and intensifying public scrutiny.

The shooting sparked immediate protests in Minneapolis, a city already deeply marked by debates over policing and racial justice following the killing of George Floyd in 2020. Community leaders, civil rights groups, and elected officials called for an independent investigation, arguing that internal federal reviews lack the credibility necessary to ensure accountability in cases

involving lethal force. This incident is not an isolated one, and there is now a constant pattern of rapid militarization of state-backed law enforcement forces in the United States. In recent times, ICE operations have especially evolved to resemble paramilitary actions, often conducted with limited transparency and minimal safety oversight. Such practices defy constitutional protections, including the right to life and due process, particularly for marginalized communities. While ICE operates under federal authority, the killing of a civilian has given rise to debates and discourses on online platforms about the limits of state power in a democratic system. Legal experts note that under both U.S. constitutional law and international human rights law, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the use of lethal force by state agents must be strictly based on necessity and proportionality. Any deviation from these principles requires thorough, impartial investigation.

Good's death has also highlighted a clash between federal enforcement agencies and local jurisdictions. Minneapolis officials stated that city police were not involved in the operation, entailing that federal actions are being carried out without coordination or accountability to local democratic institutions. Advocates argue that such operations undermine community trust and weaken democratic oversight, while also weakening the authority of local governments.

Renee Nicole Good's family has demanded justice, transparency, and systemic reform, stating that no one should lose their life during a government operation without the presence of imposing an immediate threat. Their calls have been noticed by national civil rights organizations, which have urged the Department of Justice to appoint a special prosecutor and release all footage and operational records related to the incident.

Beyond the specifics of the case, the shooting has become a focal point in a broader debate about the balance between security and human rights. Observers stress that democratic credibility depends not only on laws but on how those laws are enforced, particularly when state power results in loss of life. As investigations continue, the Minneapolis [ICE shooting](#) stands as a critical test of whether accountability mechanisms in the United States can uphold justice and protect civil liberties. Lastly, it has now become a concern whether certain "laws" even hold any significance if they are actively being detrimental to the security of civilians.



Trump's Proposed "Board of Peace"; A Way Forward or Backwards?

At a time when global conflicts show little sign of easing, Donald Trump introduced a new initiative in early 2026 that he claims could change how peace is managed worldwide, called the [Board of Peace](#). Launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the board was framed as a practical solution for diplomacy, starting with post-war Gaza but quickly expanding into other global affairs. While supporters see it as decisive leadership in chaotic times, critics warn that it represents a troubling shift in how peace and power are managed internationally.

The idea of the Board of Peace grew out of discussions linked to a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an international mechanism to help manage recovery and stability in Gaza. But the final version of the board looks very different from the original idea initiated through UN-led efforts. Under its charter, Trump is named chairman without a fixed end date, giving him unmatched authority over membership, decision-making, and priorities. Countries can join for renewable three-year terms, but those willing to contribute at least one billion dollars are granted permanent seats, a feature that has attracted skepticism in diplomatic actors. Supporters argue that the board reflects political reality. They say global institutions are slow, divided, and often paralyzed by vetoes and red-tape bureaucracy. In contrast, the Board of Peace promises fast decisions, large financial backing, and direct leadership. Some governments, particularly in the Middle East, parts of Asia and the Global South, have welcomed the initiative, seeing it as an opportunity to gain influence and access to creating funds outside traditional Western frameworks.

Yet [European governments](#) have chosen not to participate, worried that the board sidelines the United Nations and weakens the rules-based international system built after World War II. They have also questioned whether a body that is closely tied to and led by one political figure can ever act in neutrality. The economic criteria to participate in the structure and its hierarchy, has been criticized for turning peacebuilding into something resembling an exclusive club for wealthy states. Groups like Amnesty International warn that the Board of Peace risks prioritizing political deals and economic interests over accountability, justice, and international law. Without a strong accountability mechanism, the board could mechanize a model where power and money matter more than legal principles, this will eventually have adverse impacts on the voices of affected communities.

For people living in conflicted zones, especially Gaza, the board's promises feel overwhelming and uncertain. While it speaks the language of reconstruction and stability, the presence of local representation remains limited, meaning that the decisions made by this board will largely be undemocratic in nature. This gap has always hindered international peace efforts, and the Board of Peace may have a similar fate.

Ultimately, the Board of Peace is a reaction to deep-rooted problems in global politics: frustration with existing institutions, growing competition between power blocs, and a willingness to experiment with new and controversial forms of leadership. Whether it becomes a genuine force for stability or a symbol of a more fragmented world order remains to be seen. The debate over Board of Peace anticipates the clash between unilateral power and multilateral governance. As global challenges grow more complex, many observers argue that reforming international institutions, rather than sidelining them, is the way to go for upholding peace, justice, and human dignity.

UN Warns Sudan's Civilians Endure 'Horror and Hell' as War Devastates the Country.

The United Nations' top human rights official has issued a stark warning that [civilians in Sudan](#) are trapped in what he described as "horror and hell" as the country's devastating conflict enters its second year. What was once a political power struggle has now evolved into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, marked by mass atrocities, widespread displacement, and the near collapse of Sudanese society.

Since [fighting](#) erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, daily life for millions of Sudanese has been defined by violence and fear. Entire neighborhoods have been flattened, hospitals destroyed, and markets reduced to rubble. According to the United Nations, more than eight million people have been displaced, making Sudan home to the largest displacement crisis in the world today. Many have fled multiple times, seeking safety that never truly arrives. Reports indicate that civilians have been



Photo by Yusuf Yassir on Unsplash

subjected to indiscriminate bombings, targeted killings, sexual violence, ethnic attacks, and deliberate starvation tactics. In regions such as Darfur, reports of mass killings and ethnically motivated violence have raised concerns internationally. Meanwhile, in Khartoum, the once-busy streets have become battle zones, with civilians trapped in their homes without electricity, clean water, or access to medical care.

The UN Human Rights Office says it has documented credible evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by both sides. These include attacks on civilian infrastructure, looting of humanitarian aid convoys, forced recruitment of children, and widespread sexual violence against women and girls. Human rights experts warn that such acts represent serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, which require the protection of civilians during armed conflict. Aid agencies say the situation has been worsened by the systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid access. Convoys have been blocked, warehouses looted, and aid workers threatened or killed. Entire communities have been cut off from assistance, pushing millions closer to famine. The World Food Programme also warns that Sudan is on the brink of a catastrophic hunger crisis, driven not by lack of food globally, but by the inability to deliver it safely. Many observers trace the roots of the current disaster to the collapse of Sudan's fragile democratic transition following the 2021 military coup, which dismantled civilian oversight and empowered armed actors. With no effective accountability mechanisms in place, violence has spiraled unchecked.

Despite the scale of the suffering, the global response has been widely criticized as slow and fragmented. Human rights groups argue that failure to act decisively risks normalizing mass atrocities and abandoning an entire population to endless violence. Sudan's crisis, they warn, is not just a regional tragedy, it is a stark reminder of what happens when safeguarding institutions collapse and armed groups operate without restraint or consequence.



SECTION - 3

Multimedia Update: Voices Against Authoritarianism

Research Presented at the Toronto Democracy Forum

We are pleased to announce the publication of research presented at this year's Toronto Democracy Forum under WAEN's Call for Abstracts on "Civil Resistance Against Authoritarian and Religious Radicalism." Scholars from South Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Uyghur diaspora contributed original research examining how communities respond to authoritarianism and radicalism.

Below, we feature two research papers from the Toronto Democracy Forum 2025, on Uyghur resistance to authoritarian repression and youth-led democratic renewal in Bangladesh.

Transnational Repression and Uyghur Advocacy: Nonviolent Resistance Against Authoritarian Narratives of the People's Republic of China by Mehmet Tohti

How does a community hold on to its voice when an authoritarian state reaches across borders to silence it? For Uyghur diaspora communities, transnational repression—through surveillance, intimidation, and coercion has become a daily reality, often framed by the People's Republic of China (PRC) as counter-extremism. Yet these tactics not only violate individual freedoms, they also undermine democratic norms and civic space in host countries.

In this [*timely paper*](#), Mehmet Tohti examines the far-reaching impact of transnational repression on Uyghur advocacy and highlights how nonviolent resistance, grounded in truth, resilience, and coordinated civic action, can counter authoritarian narratives. The paper demonstrates how diaspora networks, civil society organizations, and international institutions can strengthen advocacy through solid documentation, policy engagement, and unified counter-disinformation efforts, while offering concrete policy recommendations for democratic governments, including Canada, to enhance protections against foreign interference and empower civil society.

To learn more about these critical insights, read our latest publication on the [*website*](#) by Mehmet Tohti, Executive Director of Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project (URAP), presented at the Toronto Democracy Forum 2025.

Youth-Led Democratic Renewal in Post-Uprising Bangladesh by Arif Nezami

How can youth movements turn mass mobilization into lasting democratic reform? In July–August 2024, the "July 36 Uprising" in Bangladesh began as student protests against a contested government job-quota system and quickly grew into nationwide demands for accountability, meritocracy, and justice. Despite a harsh state crackdown, the movement toppled the regime, opening a rare window for democratic renewal.

In this [*paper*](#), Arif Nezami explores how Bangladeshi youth transformed street activism and digital mobilization into structured civic engagement. Through reform commissions, policy labs, and expanded civic-tech platforms, youth networks produced over 100 proposals on constitutional reform, decentralization, digital rights, and governance, translating protest momentum into concrete policy influence, institutional transparency, and collaborative civic networks that reinforce democratic resilience.

To learn more about how youth activism in Bangladesh is driving democratic reform, read our latest publication on the [*website*](#) by Arif Nezami, Trustee at Preneur Lab Youth & Innovation Trust, presented at the Toronto Democracy Forum 2025.



SECTION - 4:

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