

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AMR 51/047/2009
1 April 2009

Amnesty International welcomes the USA's decision to re-engage with the United Nations Human Rights Council

Amnesty International welcomes the announcement this week by the USA that it will seek election to the United Nations Human Rights Council. This is an important expression of the USA's commitment to re-engage with the Council and the United Nations.

The organisation believes that the USA can make an important contribution to making the Human Rights Council a more effective body, particularly in situations of gross and systematic violations in specific countries.

The new US Administration has already taken a number of initiatives to improve the USA's respect for human rights. Amnesty International urges the USA to pursue additional measures aimed at improving the USA's respect for human rights. The organisation expects the US to articulate specific pledges for the promotion and protection of human rights in connection with its candidacy.

While Amnesty International welcomes the USA's decision to re-engage with and seek election to the Human Rights Council, the organization regrets that with New Zealand's withdrawal of its candidacy today there will not be a contested election for the Council seats reserved for the Western European and Other states Group (WEOG). The organisation believes that contested elections for all seats on the Council make an important contribution to ensuring that the states elected to the Council uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Background

The USA announced on 31 March 2009, that it will seek a seat on the Human Rights Council, when the UN General Assembly holds the next round of elections for Council membership on 12 May 2009. The countries seeking election to the three seats reserved for members of the WEOG in the 2009 election are Belgium, Norway and the USA.

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