



Impact of Trump Administration on Civil Society and Human Rights in the United States

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The Trump administration has inflicted significant damage to democratic institutions, human rights, and the rule of law in the United States in its six months in power. Gutting government, running rampant over the constitutional rights of citizens and others living in the country, attacking immigrants, violating the principle of separate and equal branches of government, destroying policies to protect the health and safety of residents of the United States, egregiously violating the *habeas corpus* principle and denying access to justice, dismantling anti-discriminatory protections, disregarding the rule of law, weakening and undoing environmental legislation, and so much more, the Trump administration has carried out unprecedented attacks on our government, our Constitution, and our way of life. It has also diminished our standing in the global community and put democracy, human rights, and key humanitarian efforts at greater risk around the world.

In addition to undermining numerous US laws and existing standards, the Trump administration appears to violate a fundamental principle of the OSCE Decalogue, a core element of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, namely principle 7, “Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief,” and numerous OSCE human dimension commitments, adopted during the 50 years of existence of the OSCE and encompassing human rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law.²

With regard to principle 7, the Decalogue expressly says, “The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. They will promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development.”³ In the year of the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act it is important to hold participating States, including the United States, to account to this foundational principle of the OSCE.

The Trump administration has routinely and systematically violated a range of human rights in the United States since it came to power in January 2025, as described below. This paper is not an attempt

¹ This paper was produced in the framework of the “Helsinki+50 initiative towards the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act: Reflection process on the future of the OSCE in the times of crises” project, implemented by the Civic Solidarity Platform with support of Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands.

² OSCE Human Dimension Commitments – 4th Edition. OSCE, 27 April 2023. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/human-dimension-commitments>

³ Ibid, p. 5.

to exhaustively analyze and catalogue the abuses of the Trump administration, including its attacks on the independence of the judiciary, freedom of the media and academic freedom, and its threats to civil society organizations – that would be impossible in a paper of this scope – but, rather, to document a number of examples that have broad-reaching impacts on vulnerable groups across US society. These examples describe the fundamental disrespect for human rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law expressed and implemented by the administration through its creation and enactment of policies designed to roll back decades of work to undo historical discrimination and the harms caused by institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, and other exclusionary policies.

Ending Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies

One of the first executive orders that Donald Trump signed after being sworn in as President in January 2025 was Executive Order 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, which undid previous anti-discrimination executive orders and legislation aimed at ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the government and the private sector.⁴ Claiming that by undoing DEI programs this new executive order would restore fairness and merit-based opportunity, the executive order, and subsequent executive orders and policy changes by the administration, amount to a full-on attack against people of color, LGBTQ+ communities, women, international students, climate and other activists, and other communities that find themselves targeted by the Trump administration's policies.

Executive Order 14173 “terminates diversity, equity, and inclusion discrimination in the federal workforce, and in federal contracting and spending.”⁵ Since the executive order was signed in January 2025, universities, federal agencies, companies, and other institutions have been threatened with federal funding loss and withdrawal of accreditation by the federal government. As a result, some institutions have systematically removed DEI programs. The administration has investigated dozens of universities with regard to their DEI policies, threatening their federal funding if they do not comply with the government's new mandates.⁶ Numerous universities have filed lawsuits against the US Department of Education, which has carried out politically motivated investigations into discrimination.⁷

The Trump administration has removed numerous high-ranking military officers who are women or people of color, including generals, admirals, and others in esteemed leadership positions.⁸ The Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, has led an anti-DEI crusade at the Pentagon, including shuttering the Pentagon's Women, Peace, and Security Program, which he called a “woke divisive/social justice/Biden initiative,”⁹ despite the fact that the program was initiated during Donald Trump's first presidential term.¹⁰ References to historic events and figures highlighting the achievements of

⁴ Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity. A Presidential Document by the Executive Office of the President. Federal Register, 01/31/2025. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/31/2025-02097/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Over 50 universities are under investigation as part of Trump's anti-DEI crackdown. NPR, 3/14/2025. <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/14/g-s1-53831/dei-universities-education-department-investigation>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, Trump fires top US general in unprecedented Pentagon shakeup. Reuters, 02/22/2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-pushes-out-top-us-general-nominates-retired-three-star-2025-02-22/>

⁹ Joseph Gedeon, Pete Hegseth scraps Pentagon's Women, Peace and Security program citing DEI. The Guardian, 4/29/2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/29/pete-hegseth-pentagon-women-peace-security>

¹⁰ Ibid.

minorities, people of color, and women have been removed from numerous federal agencies, including the CIA and the State Department, some of them only temporarily, but all causing significant confusion and harm within the departments and in society more broadly.

Attacks on Transgender and Non-binary People

On day one of his presidency, along with the Executive Order 14173 ending DEI, Donald Trump signed a presidential action barring transgender Americans from serving in the military and denying gender affirming care to transgender youth. This presidential action also forbids transgender women from participating in women's sports.¹¹

These attacks are based in terminology that recognizes only two genders – male and female – and claims to protect the rights of women.¹² In Orwellian language, Donald Trump states, “my Administration will defend women's rights and protect freedom of conscience by using clear and accurate language and policies that recognize women are biologically female, and men are biologically male.”¹³ He orders the Department of Homeland Security and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to “require that government-issued identification documents, including passports, visas, and Global Entry cards, accurately reflect the holder's sex, as defined under section 2 of this order; and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall ensure that applicable personnel records accurately report Federal employees' sex, as defined by section 2 of this order.”¹⁴ He also provides a list of publications on gender identity, which are to be removed as “guidance” documents from federal institutions. The implications have been felt across government and the private sector.

On May 8, 2025, the Pentagon issued an order stating that over 1,000 members of the US military with “gender dysphoria” would be separated from service “voluntarily” until a deadline of June 6, 2025.¹⁵ This gross violation of human rights was supported by the US Supreme Court, reversing the executive order signed by former President Joe Biden in 2021, which allowed transgender soldiers to openly serve in the military.¹⁶

Donald Trump signed an executive order banning transgender women from women's sports on February 5, 2025, claiming that it would stop the “war” on female athletes.¹⁷ Numerous localities and

¹¹Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism And Restoring Biological Truth To The Federal Government. The White House, 1/20/2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Implementing Policy on Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness. Secretary of Defense, 5/8/2025. <https://media.defense.gov/2025/May/08/2003706668/-1/-1/1/IMPLEMENTING-POLICY-ON-PRIORITIZING-MILITARY-EXCELLENCE-AND-READINESS.PDF>

¹⁶ Amy Howe, Supreme Court allows Trump to ban transgender people from military. SCOTUSblog, 5/6/2025. <https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/05/supreme-court-allows-trump-to-ban-transgender-people-from-military/>

¹⁷ Will Graves, Trump signs executive order intended to bar transgender athletes from girls' and women's sports. AP News, 2/6/2025. <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-transgender-athletes-3606411fc12effec95a893351624e1b>; Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports. The White House, 2/5/2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/keeping-men-out-of-womens-sports/>

states have pushed back against this executive order, including the state of Maine and the state of California. Ongoing litigation regarding the executive order continues.

Attacks on Healthcare, Including Reproductive Rights

Simultaneously, the Trump administration has attacked women's healthcare, including reproductive healthcare, both in the US and abroad, through cuts to critical programs formerly provided by government agencies such as USAID. The Trump administration has also taken down information on federal government websites, such as [reproductiverights.gov](https://www.reproductiverights.gov), which provided critical healthcare and reproductive information. At present, abortion is illegal in thirteen US states and severely limited (with gestational limits of 6 to 18 weeks) in an additional seven.¹⁸ The Trump administration has repeatedly attacked the nonprofit healthcare group, Planned Parenthood, which has provided affordable reproductive healthcare to the public since 1916.¹⁹ Access to healthcare, including Medicare and Medicaid, is under threat, especially for the most vulnerable Americans, with budget cuts that will exclude millions of Americans from access to affordable healthcare.²⁰ In addition, in June 2025, the Trump administration threatened to withhold federal funding from public schools that do not remove gender identity from sex education classes. The state of California is at risk of losing some \$12.3 million in federal grants if it does not comply with the demand to remove gender identity references from the curriculum.²¹

Threats to the Environment and Climate

Since the Trump administration has taken office, significant cuts to environmental protection and climate research, mitigation and adaptation measures have been threatened. These include significant cuts to domestic programs as well as withdrawing the United States from key international climate negotiations and programs including the Paris Agreement. The first Trump administration withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement; the Biden administration rejoined the treaty, and Trump, through executive order on January 20, 2025, again withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement, stating,

“In recent years, the United States has purported to join international agreements and initiatives that do not reflect our country's values or our contributions to the pursuit of economic and environmental objectives. Moreover, these agreements steer

¹⁸ Annette Choi and Devan Cole, Abortion law state map: See where abortions are legal or banned. CNN, 6/26/2025. <https://edition.cnn.com/us/abortion-access-restrictions-bans-us-dg>

¹⁹ History of Planned Parenthood, Planned Parenthood, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/our-history>

²⁰ Andrés Argüello and Andrea Ducas, The Big, ‘Beautiful’ Bill’s Health Care Cuts Would Drive Up Uncompensated Care and Threaten Vulnerable Hospitals. Center for American Progress, 5/23/2025. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-big-beautiful-bills-health-care-cuts-would-drive-up-uncompensated-care-and-threaten-vulnerable-hospitals/>

²¹ Brooke Schultz, Trump Admin. Orders California to Remove Gender Identity From Sex Ed Curriculum. Education Week, 6/24/2025. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/trump-admin-orders-california-to-remove-gender-identity-from-sex-ed-curriculum/2025/06>

American taxpayer dollars to countries that do not require, or merit, financial assistance in the interests of the American people.”²²

In the lead up to COP30 global climate conference in November 2025 in Brazil, leaders are being forced to “rethink many things,”²³ including the resource gap left by the US’ departure from the global climate finance fund, which will officially take place in January 2026, a year after Trump signed the executive order, per the rules of the Paris Agreement. The absence of US leadership in combating the climate crisis is a concern voiced by world leaders, and six months out from COP30, only 21 countries have submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with 174 countries not submitting as of May 8, 2025. Ironically, the US is one of the countries that submitted its NDCs – under the Biden administration and prior to Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.²⁴

Domestic Environmental and Climate Concerns Related to the OSCE

In addition to its disturbing withdrawal from international climate commitments, the Trump administration has begun an all-out assault on the environment and climate action within the United States.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the key federal governmental body charged with environmental protection, is being aggressively dismantled. As of this writing, during which budget negotiations are occurring in the US Congress, the Trump administration 2026 budget allocates an insufficient \$4.16 billion for fiscal year 2026, a 54% decrease from 2025 levels.²⁵ This means key programs to protect water, air, soil, and other natural resources will suffer.

Earlier this year, the Trump administration eliminated an EPA \$3 billion environmental justice grant program, which provided funding to communities to address longstanding pollution issues around the country.²⁶ The environmental law NGO, Earthjustice, together with environmental justice partners, has sued the Trump administration, demanding the program be reinstated.²⁷

²² Putting America First In International Environmental Agreements. The White House, 1/20/2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/putting-america-first-in-international-environmental-agreements/>

²³ Prashant Rao, US climate withdrawal forcing a ‘rethink’: COP30 president. Semafor, 1/26/2025. <https://www.semafor.com/article/06/26/2025/us-climate-withdrawal-forcing-a-rethink-cop30-president>

²⁴ Six months out from COP30, only 21 countries have submitted updated climate targets. International Institute for Environment and Development, 5/9/2025. <https://www.ied.org/six-months-out-cop30-only-21-countries-have-submitted-updated-climate-targets>

²⁵ FY 2026 EPA Budget in Brief. United States Environmental Protection Agency, May 2025. <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-05/fy-2026-epa-bib.pdf>

²⁶ Meg Slattery, Trump’s EPA Cancelled 350 Environmental Justice Grants, Then Congress Cut Funding for Future Projects. Here’s Why That Matters. Earthjustice, 7/11/2025. <https://earthjustice.org/article/trumps-epa-cancelled-350-environmental-justice-grants-then-congress-cut-funding-for-future-projects-heres-why-that-matters>

²⁷ Nonprofits, Tribes and Local Governments Sue Trump Administration for Terminating EPA Grant Programs. Earthjustice, 6/25/2025. <https://earthjustice.org/press/2025/nonprofits-tribes-and-local-governments-sue-trump-administration-for-terminating-epa-grant-programs>

Cuts to the EPA also threaten scientific innovations, undo decades of environmental regulation, weaken environmental standards, including for clean air and water, and threaten the United States' natural resources, including oceans, forests, and other national monuments.²⁸

The Trump administration has closed the office of climate diplomacy at the US Department of State.²⁹ It has made and proposed additional cuts to the National Park Service, the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of the Interior,³⁰ and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.³¹ Key provisions that have been in place for decades to protect wild spaces in the United States are being dismantled, which will enable fast-tracking of oil and gas development, lease “commingling,” and other efforts to ease and facilitate fossil fuel extraction.³²

Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement Attack Migrants

The Trump administration attacked immigrants in the United States during its first six months, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are among the few US government agencies experiencing an increase in their budget for 2026, with a proposed “\$11 billion for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which is \$959.9 million above the Fiscal Year 2025 enacted level.”³³ With the current budget increase, ICE is the largest federal law enforcement agency in the country.³⁴

By its own calculation, in the first 100 days of the second Trump administration, ICE arrested “66,463 illegal aliens and removed 65,682 aliens.”³⁵ Many of those individuals have been denied due process, habeas corpus, and are ill-treated. Between February 2025 and mid-July 2025, over 3,500 individuals have been disappeared into the ICE system without a trace.³⁶

²⁸ EPA Launches Biggest Deregulatory Action in U.S. History. United States Environmental Protection Agency, 3/12/2025. <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-launches-biggest-deregulatory-action-us-history>

²⁹ Trump scraps US office on climate diplomacy. AFP, 4/25/2025. https://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Trump_scraps_US_office_on_climate_diplomacy_999.html

³⁰ House appropriators OK cuts to Interior, EPA, other agencies. E&E News by POLITICO, 07/15/2025. <https://www.eenews.net/articles/house-appropriators-ok-cuts-to-interior-epa-other-agencies/>

³¹ Sam Zeno and Jenny Rowland-Shea, The Trump Administration Is Recklessly Axing Funding and Staff for America's National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands. Center for American Progress, 7/1/2025. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administration-is-recklessly-axing-funding-and-staff-for-americas-national-parks-forests-and-public-lands/>

³² Interior Proposes Updates to Commingling Rules to Boost Energy Production and Efficiency. U.S. Department of the Interior, 07/07/2025. <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-proposes-updates-commingling-rules>; Mark Oliver, US interior agency to fast track fossil fuel and mining permits over ‘fake emergency’. The Guardian, 4/24/2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/24/interior-agency-fossil-fuel-mining-permits>

³³ HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS BILL 2026 SUMMARY. The House Appropriation Committee, 6/8/2025. <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-appropriations.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/fy26-homeland-security-bill-summary.pdf>

³⁴ Lauren-Brooke Eisen, Budget Bill Massively Increases Funding for Immigration Detention. Brennan Center for Justice, 7/3/2025. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/budget-bill-massively-increases-funding-immigration-detention>

³⁵ 100 days of record-breaking immigration enforcement in the US interior. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 4/29/2025. <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/100-days-record-breaking-immigration-enforcement-us-interior>

³⁶ United States Disappeared Tracker. Tableau Public, updated daily. Accessed on July 16, 2025. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/danielleharlow/viz/UnitedStatesDisappearedTracker/Map>

The media have covered the stories of over 200 Venezuelans who were disappeared by the Trump administration, but there are many other incidents, including women and children, both inside and outside of the United States.³⁷ The Trump administration has disappeared people in El Salvador, Guantanamo Bay, and at ICE and Border Patrol facilities in the United States.³⁸

Denied legal protections, immigrants are being rounded up from their workplaces, their homes, universities, courthouses, and other locations, often separating families and leaving children unprotected. ICE agents can detain someone if “the immigration officer has “reason to believe” that the alien is in the United States unlawfully and is likely to escape before a warrant can be obtained.”³⁹ This stipulation gives ICE officers enormous discretion, especially in the current environment in which ICE has been tasked with increasing the number of people taken into detention. Racial profiling by ICE has resulted in US citizens being swept up in raids of Latino and other communities of color.⁴⁰ Total ICE arrests shot up at the end of May after White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller gave the agency a quota of 3,000 arrests a day, up from 650 a day in the first five months of Trump’s second term. ICE arrested nearly 30% more people in May than in April, according to the Transactional Records Clearinghouse or TRAC. That number rose again in June, by another 28%.⁴¹

Creating New Centers to Hold Those Who Are Detained

The administration has been creating facilities to hold migrants around the country, including working with local law enforcement where it can.⁴² In June 2025, the Trump administration created a new facility, Alligator Alcatraz,⁴³ in the Everglades of Florida, in the Big Cypress National Preserve.⁴⁴ Home to alligators, snakes, pumas, bears, and other wildlife, the Everglades is also one of the United States’ natural treasures. The facility is located adjacent to the tribal lands of the Miccosukee, who have joined in a lawsuit together with environmental groups to sue state and federal agencies for failure to conduct a required environmental impact assessment prior to creating Alligator Alcatraz.⁴⁵

³⁷ The Trump Administration is Forcibly Disappearing Migrants. Human Rights First, assessed on July 15, 2025. <https://humanrightsfirst.org/the-trump-administration-is-forcibly-disappearing-migrants/>

³⁸ Katherine Hawkins, How Trump Is Disappearing Migrants. Lawfare, 5/13/2025. <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/how-trump-is-disappearing-migrants>

³⁹ ICE's General Authority to Arrest and Detain. US Congress. https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/LSB/HTML/LSB10362.web.html

⁴⁰ Russell Contreras, ICE accused of racial profiling in detentions of Latino U.S. citizens, Axios, 7/9/2025. <https://www.axios.com/2025/07/09/ice-us-citizens-detention-racial-profiling>; Meagan Jordan, ICE Raids Seen As Latino Issue – Black Communities Are Also at Risk. Rolling Stone, 7/14/2025. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-commentary/ice-raids-latino-issue-black-communities-1235384699/>

⁴¹ Melissa Goldin, Trump says he wants to deport ‘the worst of the worst,’ but ICE data shows 72% of people detained have no criminal convictions. Fortune, 7/12/2025. <https://fortune.com/2025/07/12/ice-raids-trump-immigration-crackdown-deportation-no-criminal-convictions/>

⁴² Mohamed Al Elew and Wendy Fry, Here’s Every Local Police Agency Enforcing for ICE. The Markup, 4/16/2025. <https://themarkup.org/tools/2025/04/16/law-enforcement-ice-cooperation-tracker>

⁴³ This is the official name of the facility, not merely a colloquial name thought up by administration officials. C.A. Bridges, Is Alligator Alcatraz the actual name of Florida immigrant facility? USA Today, 7/8/2025. <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/07/08/alligator-alcatraz-official-name-florida-immigrant-detention/84502452007/>

⁴⁴ Deanne Stillman, Alligator Alcatraz: The ICE Detention Center Is a Sin Against Nature. Washington Monthly, 7/15/2025. <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2025/07/15/alligator-alcatraz/>

⁴⁵ Miacel Spotted Elk, Florida tribe joins lawsuit to stop “Alligator Alcatraz” for immigrants. Grist, 7/15/2025. <https://grist.org/indigenous/a-florida-tribe-joins-the-fight-against-the-alligator-alcatraz-immigrant-detention-center/>

On the site of an abandoned air runway in the Big Cypress National Preserve, the administration and the Florida state government created a detention center for immigrants. In the span of eight days, they constructed a facility made largely of trailers, cages, and tents, in which more than 700 detainees are already being held as of July 14, 2025.⁴⁶ Reports of inadequate plumbing, limited access to medical and legal care, and inhuman conditions already plague the facility.⁴⁷ Lawmakers who demanded to see the facility in July 2025 were initially denied access. When they were finally able to visit, they were not allowed to speak with the prisoners, and provided accounts of backed up sewage, cage-like conditions, people being forced to sleep with lights on, not being allowed to shower, and denied access to legal counsel.⁴⁸

How long people will be forced to stay in these conditions is unclear. Images from Alligator Alcatraz show flooding on the road to the facility. Reports of extreme heat, mosquitoes, and poor hygienic facilities raise extremely concerning questions about compliance with legal standards.

These practices violate a number of OSCE human dimension commitments and international human rights norms, including freedom from arbitrary detention, prohibition of torture and enforced disappearances, guarantees of fair trial and effective remedies, protection of the rights of the child, and more.

Possible Violations of the OSCE Decalogue, OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and International Human Rights Norms

The United States under the Trump administration appears to be in violation of international human rights standards, provisions of the OSCE Decalogue principle 7, and various OSCE human dimension commitments. The ideological and physical attacks on at-risk populations in the US, the creation of policies designed to marginalize and disempower groups previously protected by the law, and the brutal attack on migrant populations in the US are alarming. Furthermore, the dismantling of US international assistance programs that combat human rights threats and humanitarian crises around the world has led to the suffering of large populations at risk and the strengthening of authoritarianism across the globe. While it is extremely difficult to ascertain the cost of what has been lost by the Trump administration's devastating cuts to USAID, democracy programming, independent media, and other programs in the first six months of 2025, on July 18, 2025, the US Congress passed a bill proposed by the Trump administration to cut foreign assistance and public broadcasting by \$9 billion in the 2026 federal budget.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Billal Rahman, Alligator Alcatraz Detainees Revealed in Full List. Newsweek, 7/14/2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/alligator-alcatraz-detainee-full-list-2098670>

⁴⁷ John Yang, Lorna Baldwin, Claire Mufson, A look at the controversy around 'Alligator Alcatraz' detention center. PBS News Weekend, 7/13/2025. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-look-at-the-controversy-around-alligator-alcatraz-detention-center>

⁴⁸ Phil Fernandez, 'Help me!' Democrats decry 'vile' conditions at 'Alligator Alcatraz' immigrant prison. USA Today, 7/14/2025. <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/07/14/vile-conditions-alligator-alcatraz-migrant-prison/85196347007/>

⁴⁹ US House passes Trump plan to cut \$9bn from foreign aid, public broadcasting. The Guardian, July 18, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/18/us-house-vote-trump-cut-foreign-aid-public-broadcasting>

The numerous human rights violations described, and the categorical denial of basic human rights for society's most vulnerable members warrant adequate reaction by OSCE participating States and OSCE bodies and institutions. Possible actions in the OSCE framework could include raising concerns at the Permanent Council and the Human Dimension Committee meetings and at the human dimension conferences, invocation of the Vienna and the Moscow mechanisms by concerned participating States, public and quiet diplomacy by heads of OSCE institutions, monitoring and reporting by OSCE institutions, provision of support to and cooperation with US civil society organizations, and other steps.

There are also serious questions about the US' non-compliance with the UN Charter, including Donald Trump's disrespect for sovereignty and independence of other states and his threats to use force to annex their territories – which is also a violation of other principles of the Helsinki Decalogue and OSCE commitments in the military-political dimension. However, this is beyond the scope of this paper.

Undoubtedly, the laws and policies of the Trump administration violate the norms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and legally binding international human rights treaties. The Trump administration's exit of the United States from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in January 2025 (the US had withdrawn from the Council in 2017 when Trump was president the first time, and then re-joined in 2021 when President Biden was elected), is a troublesome sign, but it does not preclude UNHRC from taking action against human rights violations in the US.

OSCE participating States can work together with representatives of the United Nations, with Special Rapporteurs and other special procedures of UNHRC, and with other relevant international bodies to hold the US government to account to its responsibilities with regard to membership in these organizations, including as a participating State of the OSCE.

In this 50th anniversary year of the Helsinki Agreement, it is more important than ever that we hold to account all participating States, ensuring that the fundamental principles of the Final Act are upheld.