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governments and First Nations, and facilitate truth-telling of First Nations' histories. These steps were seen as laying the foundation for a treaty with Australia's First Nations peoples.

A **2018** parliamentary committee endorsed the need for a voice in parliament and has called for a process of co-design between indigenous people and government appointees.

10. LGBTI discrimination

One year on from the breakthrough on marriage equality, the parliamentary year ended with Australia's politicians unable to find a way to remove legislative exemptions allowing religious schools to discriminate against LGBTI pupils and teachers.



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4. Facebook's reckoning

Free speech, privacy and electoral integrity came under the microscope in March, when a former employee of Cambridge Analytica blew the whistle on its practice of harvesting data from millions of US Facebook users in an effort to influence the [2016](#) presidential elections.

Cambridge Analytica was also investigated in the UK for a possible role in the Brexit referendum.

There is also growing criticism of Facebook for not doing enough to stop its use to spread hate speech. For example, in Myanmar it has been used as a tool to incite violence against Rohingya.



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government weapons and military equipment that may well contribute to its Yemen campaign.

8. Children off Nauru

Australia's government appeared to respond to the "Kids Off Nauru" campaign launched by civil society groups, medical professionals and lawyers. December figures show ten refugee children remain on the island, down from 119 children in August.

Mounting political pressure forced the government to remove children who had been transferred there in [2013](#) and [2014](#), though many were removed from Nauru only after legal proceedings were started. But the departure of families makes the situation even more



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increases the responsibility of governments like Australia's to ensure the council addresses the world's most serious human rights violations.

3. Violence against women

In Australia, while the #MeToo movement has spurred women to come forward with their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse, a number of high-profile cases of alleged sexual harassment by actors and politicians highlighted ongoing barriers to justice for victims. At the same time, the #countingdeadwomen femicide index reports that one woman in Australia is killed every week by an intimate partner.

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5. Rohingya crisis

In August, a UN Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar, which included Australian human rights expert Chris Sidoti, delivered a scathing report detailing crimes against humanity, war crimes, sexual violence and possible genocide by Myanmar's security forces against the Rohingya.

The UN Human Rights Council, in response, created a mechanism to collect and preserve evidence to aid future prosecutions for atrocity crimes in Myanmar. Australia joined other Western nations in imposing targeted sanctions on military officers named in the UN report. While the Australian government maintains an arms embargo on Myanmar, our



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maintains an arms embargo on Myanmar, our defense forces continue to provide training to the Myanmar military.

6. Crackdown against Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang

Turkic Muslims in China's northwestern Xinjiang region have long faced repression. In [2018](#), Human Rights Watch and others reported an escalation in this repression with the government detaining 1 million people in political re-education camps, with evidence of their torture and mistreatment. Muslims not detained still face pervasive controls on freedom of movement and religion. The Foreign Affairs Department revealed under parliamentary questioning that three Australians were detained in the camps.



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7. Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia made international headlines when a prominent journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, was murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. The case prompted a closer examination of Saudi Arabia's human rights record. The country's repression, imprisonment and ill-treatment of activists includes the alleged torture of leading women's rights defenders.

In Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition has committed many violations of international humanitarian law, including apparent war crimes killing thousands of civilians. Millions of Yemenis are confronting a famine, in part because of restrictions on aid delivery. Yet the USA, UK, France and Australia sell the Saudi



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delivered a strong statement about Myanmar's atrocities against ethnic Rohingya Muslims, but was criticised for holding refugees and asylum seekers offshore. While Australia supported important country resolutions, it failed to take a leadership role on any key issues.

2. United States' retreat from Human Rights Council

The US faced international condemnation when it quit the Human Rights Council, calling it a "protector of human rights abusers and a cesspool of political bias." The US has long complained of the council's perceived bias against Israel. But, by withdrawing, the US decreased its options for confronting and addressing human rights violators. This



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desperate for the adults left behind. And those transferred to Australia are told they will not remain permanently, keeping them in limbo.

9. One year since the Uluru statement

Indigenous communities have fought hard throughout [2018](#) to have the federal government focus on the Uluru Statement from the Heart, after the Turnbull government dismissed it out of hand in [2017](#).

The statement calls for a constitutionally enshrined "First Nations Voice" in parliament and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to supervise agreement-making between governments and First Nations, and facilitate truth-telling of First Nations' histories. These



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Advocates and the Labor opposition rejected government amendments that sought to stop schools being able to exclude students on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics, but would also allow them to enforce rules in line with their religious teachings.

Myanmar Rohingya:

In August 2017, a deadly crackdown by Myanmar's army on Rohingya Muslims sent hundreds of thousands fleeing across the border into Bangladesh.

They risked everything to escape by sea or on foot a military offensive which the United Nations later described as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing".



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Human Rights Ten Issues

2018 Human Rights WatchOn December 10, the world marks 70 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Regrettably, instead of the anniversary signalling the enduring impact of human rights, some are fearing the “end of human rights.” Here we highlight some of the rights challenges that captured the world’s attention this year, illustrating the struggle to secure human rights is far from over.

1. Australia's first year on the UN Human Rights Council

Australia took its place on the UN Human Rights Council this year for a three-year term. Australia

