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European States legally responsible for rendition abuses

The complicity of European Union (EU) member states in the US-led renditions programme must be addressed at the European Summit meeting tomorrow. The meeting is an important opportunity for the EU to commit to ending renditions on European soil, said Amnesty International.

This call came as the organization released a report detailing cases involving seven European states -- including four EU members. The report analyses the various levels of involvement by these states and explains how states are complicit under international law for human rights abuses carried out in renditions. Rendition is an unlawful practice in which individuals have been illegally detained and secretly flown to third countries where they have been subjected to other crimes such as torture or other ill-treatment and "disappearance".

Publication of the report *Partners in crime: Europe's role in US renditions* comes after the publication last week of Senator Marty's Council of Europe hard-hitting draft report, and marks the launch of Amnesty International's campaign to end rendition in the region.

"Europe often presents itself as a beacon for human rights. The uncomfortable truth is that without Europe's help, some men would not now be nursing torture wounds in prison cells in various parts of the world," said Claudio Cordone, Senior Director for Research.

"European states should end their 'see no evil, hear no evil' approach to rendition flights and instead take active steps to end the practice in their territories."

"European states must not hide their complicity in US renditions behind the cloak of their intelligence agencies," said Claudio Cordone. "Some states have even handed people over to the CIA and thus bear responsibility for the subsequent torture and other abuses suffered by those people."

Under international law, states that facilitate transfers to countries where they know or should know that there is a risk of serious human rights abuses are complicit in these abuses and individuals complicit in abductions, torture or "disappearances" should be held criminally responsible.

The rendition programme has also highlighted the fact that US secret services can operate covertly in Europe outside the rule of law and without accountability. The EU should ensure the development of a regulatory framework governing the activities of national and foreign intelligence agencies.

Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey and EU members Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK are all implicated in the six rendition cases detailed in the report. In each case, men have been bundled onto planes and transferred abroad, without due process, to detention sites where they all say they have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated. While the way in which each state is implicated differs -- from allowing airports and airspace on their territory to be used, to participating in the arrest or abduction of people and handing them over to US Secret Services -- their action, or lack of action, contravened their obligations under international law. They should be held to account.

Information from flight logs, journalists, intelligence agents, and NGOs as well as the data collected by investigations led at the European level, make denials by European states of involvement in renditions ring increasingly hollow.

"Persistent denials from European states of their involvement in renditions and the lack of any meaningful response from the EU apart from the Parliament, pose a serious problem -- not only for the credibility of the EU, but ultimately for the effectiveness of the counter-terrorist effort itself," said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU office.

Amnesty International is also calling for the Council of Europe to continue its work towards uncovering this practice by setting up a commission of inquiry and working to ensure that any shortcomings in legislation are addressed regionally and by states individually.

**For a full copy of the report *Partners in crime: Europe's role in US renditions* please see:
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur010082006>**

For further information on the campaign please see: amnesty.org/stoptorture

Public Document

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