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EU-US SUMMIT: CLEAR RENDITIONS AND CLOSE GUANTÁNAMO

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(Brussels, 20 June) Addressing abuses in the US-led “war on terror” should be a priority at tomorrow’s EU-US Summit in Vienna, says Amnesty International.

Ahead of the Summit, Amnesty International asked the EU to demand full disclosure of the US renditions programme and make a formal appeal for the closure of Guantánamo, and for all other detention facilities run by the US government to be opened up to external scrutiny and brought into full compliance with international law and standards. (A briefing paper is available at www.amnesty-eu.org)

“After more than four years, the EU finally seems ready to demand the closure of Guantánamo. It is a positive step but the EU cannot ignore other US detention centres and the complicity of its own Member States in the rendition programme that sent people to Guantánamo and elsewhere,” says Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International’s EU Office.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the US authorities continue to hold thousands of detainees who are denied justice and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment. The recent deaths at Guantánamo have served as a tragic reminder that the regime of indefinite detention and harsh, isolating conditions are causing extreme despair at the detention camp.

Amnesty International considers that the EU has a responsibility to ensure that US authorities protect the welfare of the detainees, given the involvement of EU Member States in renditions and the obligations enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The EU should therefore do all it can to prevent further suffering and deaths, by demanding that the US grant independent medical and psychological experts access to all US detention facilities. Adequate means of communication with family members and legal counsel should be provided, and UN experts and international human rights organizations should be given access to the detainees.

Tomorrow’s event is also the proper opportunity for the EU to ask for a detailed account of CIA activities in its territory, given the US government’s admission of a program of renditions, with the knowledge of European countries.

Amnesty International hopes that the EU will be ready to demand of the US full disclosure of the CIA’s operations in Europe, in particular the exact location of any detention sites in European countries.

“Can this Summit provide guarantees that the CIA is no longer using Europe as a platform to illegally transfer detainees to Guantánamo or secret facilities elsewhere?” asked Dick Oosting.

For further comment/background and interviews:

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