

AI Index: EUR 01/001/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 032
13 February 2003

EU OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

EU SUMMIT ON IRAQ:HUMAN SECURITY ALONGSIDE WEAPONS SECURITY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON EU LEADERS TO MAKE THE FATE OF CIVILIANS THEIR TOP PRIORITY

(Brussels 14 February) Amnesty International calls on European Union leaders to seize the chance to show unity on Iraq by putting the plight of the Iraqi people of Iraq and surrounding countries at the top of their agenda for Monday's emergency EU summit.

In an open letter sent to the Greek EU Presidency and all EU heads of state and government (see: www.amnesty-eu.org), Amnesty International calls on EU leaders to stage a **serious, substantial** and **open debate** on the likely consequences of war, in particular:

- The potential effect of military action on the human rights of the Iraqi people;
- The risk of exacerbating an already bleak critical humanitarian situation;
- The risk of creating massive flows of refugeesmassive numbers of people forced into flight;
- The risk of direct attacks on civilians, the use of human shields and of inherently indiscriminate weapons.

"The European Union, as a community of values and a key actor on the international stage, has an obligation to establish common ground on how it will face up to the likely consequences of war. EU leaders must give urgent attention to what has the potential to be a massive human rights disaster for the people of Iraq," said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"The European Council must send a strong and united message to the UN Security Council to put human security first before taking any action. We urge the two permanent members of the Security Council from the EU - Britain and France - to take this message with them." Amnesty International is also calling on the Security Council to immediately deploy human rights monitors throughout Iraq.

"Public discussion on Iraq is dominated by the tactics and timing of weapons inspections and spy planes, but there is little real public debate by world leaders about estimates of how to prevent civilian casualties, and disruption to food supplies and about the fate of those who will be driven from their homes. This is what EU leaders should be discussing," said Dick Oosting.

Amnesty International has launched a worldwide petition: <http://www.amnesty.org/go/iraq> addressed to the President of the UN Security Council, urging the Security Council to examine and debate in-depth the likely consequences of war on the human rights and humanitarian plight of Iraqi civilians before taking any further action.

For further comment/background and interviews:

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