

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

EU OPEN LETTER

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Open letter to Heads of State and Government of the European Union:

THERE SHOULD BE NO “OPT-OUT” FROM FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

On the eve of the informal European Council due to settle the new reform treaty, Amnesty International appeals to Heads of State and Government with a strong protest against the creation of double standards in the area of fundamental rights.

In practice, any “opt-outs” of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights would create inequality in Europe, with some countries offering less protection than others. This would undermine the notion of European citizenship as enshrined in the EU treaties, and puts in question how genuine the EU’s commitment to human rights really is.

The protection and promotion of human rights are part of the founding principles of the EU. As such, allowing any exception in this domain is not only inconsistent but it undermines the very basis of a union of values.

To the outside world, it sends a poor signal of the importance the EU attributes to human rights. By accepting different standards in this area the EU would seriously compromise its credibility and undermine the effectiveness of its human rights policy as a whole.

At a time when Europe’s leaders have yet to provide an answer to the cases of kidnappings, torture and enforced disappearances that occurred with European complicity as a result of CIA illegal activities, the discussion should be about how the EU can collectively reinforce human rights protection – and not about Member States trying to circumvent their obligations.

At the moment when the EU Charter is to gain legal status, Amnesty International calls on the Heads of State and Government not to jeopardise progress achieved since the solemn proclamation made in 2000 in Nice by accepting opt-outs from what they have collectively declared to be the fundamental rights of the European Union.