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Denmark: Amnesty International calls on Danish EU presidency to take concrete action to eradicate torture

On the eve of Denmark's accession to the Presidency of the European Union, Amnesty International has addressed a detailed memorandum to the Danish EU Presidency with proposals for improving the EU's human rights record, both within Europe and beyond its borders.

In the document: "The European Union and Human Rights: Time to Change. A Human Rights Agenda for the 2002 Danish Presidency" (available on www.amnesty-eu.org) Amnesty International calls on Denmark to "reaffirm its deep commitment and its serious engagement on human rights, not only in other parts of the world, but also at home."

Launching the report in Copenhagen, Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan called on the EU to restore the human rights balance in all its policies. "Despite the good intentions and great efforts, and certainly also positive results in some policy areas," she said, "there is an increasing sense of the collective human rights effort hitting a glass ceiling."

"We have witnessed how fragile the EU's human rights commitments can be, in particular since 11 September. Now, the unprecedented anti-immigration drive of some EU countries threatens to sacrifice the rights of those who need protection."

Amnesty International calls on the Danish presidency to ensure that the EU's existing human rights commitments are actually implemented. In particular, Amnesty International urges Denmark, which has been the cradle and international centre for expertise and rehabilitation of torture victims, to make the eradication of torture a key priority during its presidency.

"Our demands for action are part of an appeal by Amnesty International for a more comprehensive human rights perspective in the Danish Presidency's agenda, and through that, in the overall work of the European Union," said Irene Khan.

Four steps to stamp out torture

Amnesty International calls on the Danish presidency to focus on the application of the 2001 Guidelines on eradication of torture by:

- Securing adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture;
- Preventing torture in countries where incommunicado detention continues to exist by immediately following up reports of arrests or "disappearances" where detainees are at risk of torture or ill-treatment;

Profiling the EU's policy against torture through EU missions;
Using high level political dialogues to persuade states to sign up, or adhere to international commitments on eradicating torture.

The EU's external relations

In addition Amnesty International calls on the Danish Presidency to:
Strengthen controls on arms transfers from EU countries;
Review the human rights clause to make it an active tool;
Ensure consistency in the EU's country and regional approaches.

Inside the EU

Ensure refugee protection by inserting a proper human rights perspective into the asylum debate;
Sustain a human rights focus in the accession countries;
Ensure human rights standards within the EU are observed and scrutinized;
Fight racism through a comprehensive strategy and action program.

For further information, interviews or to obtain the report on the Danish Presidency, please contact:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels):

Tel: 32-2-5021499

Fax: 32-2-5025686

Email: amnesty-eu@aieu.be

Web-site: www.amnesty-eu.org

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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