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EU-Libya cooperation: No safeguards for refugees

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING TO EU JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS MINISTERS

(Brussels, 12 April 2005) Amnesty International has today issued a briefing paper on the deplorable treatment of refugees and illegal immigrants in Libya in the lead up to this week's discussion at EU level about enhancing co-operation with Libya on illegal immigration.

"Immigration Cooperation with Libya: The Human Rights Perspective. Amnesty International briefing ahead of the Justice and Home Affairs Council, 14 April 2005" is available on <http://www.amnesty-eu.org> from 09.00 12 April.

Amnesty International understands EU JHA ministers will discuss future co-operation with Libya on illegal immigration on the basis of a report by the European Commission following a mission to the country late last year. Amnesty International has called for this report to be made public to allow a dialogue involving all relevant actors including the European Parliament.

"The European Union must recognize that in Libya, there is effectively no guarantee of refugee rights. Libya does not allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to operate properly in the country and people forcibly returned to Libya from Europe risk degrading detention conditions and further expulsion to countries where they may face imprisonment and torture," Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office said.

"In this context, deportations of 'irregular migrants' to Libya as carried out repeatedly by EU Member States, in particular by Italy and Malta, should be immediately halted as these removals may be in breach of Member States' obligations under international law," he said.

In its briefing paper, Amnesty International outlines its concerns about the EU and its Member States developing "ad hoc" cooperation mechanisms with Libya on illegal immigration without adequate human rights safeguards.

"This would in fact undermine the credibility of the EU's own 'Barcelona Process' with Mediterranean countries which, among other things, aims to enhance the respect for human rights throughout the region," Dick Oosting warned. "If the EU is to engage with Libya, the dialogue and cooperation at EU level should, as a minimum, include clear human rights conditionality."

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