

# **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT**

Index: ASA 11/2750/2015

26 October 2015

## **Amnesty International condemns deplorable attack on Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission**

Amnesty International strongly condemns the deplorable attack on a vehicle that was carrying eight staff members of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in Jalalabad city, Nanagarhar province today. The attack – carried out through a remote controlled improvised explosive device (IED) – killed two security guards of the AIHRC and wounded six other staff members, and reportedly occurred when the car was transferring staff members from their homes to their offices. No one has yet claimed responsibility.

The AIHRC is a crucial institution whose staff work tirelessly, often under very difficult conditions, to protect the human rights of the Afghan people. This attack was an assault on one of the key bulwarks against human rights violations in Afghanistan.

Amnesty International calls on the Afghan authorities immediately to conduct a thorough, independent and impartial investigation and bring those responsible to justice. If the AIHRC was deliberately targeted, it could amount to a war crime.

Human rights defenders and activists operate under a climate of fear in Afghanistan and are frequently targeted in attacks by the Taliban and other armed groups as well as by powerful warlords and pro-government armed groups. Too often these attacks go unpunished as authorities lack the resources or political will to investigate them and hold those responsible to account. This has created a dangerous pattern of impunity, which the Afghan authorities must break. It is the duty of the Afghan government to make sure that all human rights defenders and the institutions that are working to protect and promote human rights are adequately protected.

Amnesty International calls on all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan to respect international human rights law, to ensure that civilians are protected and that human rights defenders, including women, and media workers are not targeted for their work.