

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Secretary General of Amnesty International to visit US-Mexico border as Amnesty launches worldwide campaign on the US

Atlanta - As Amnesty International today launches its first-ever worldwide campaign on the United States, its Secretary General, Pierre Sané, will visit the US-Mexico border on Thursday, 8 October, where he will tour "Operation Rio Grande" with the US Border Patrol and meet with human rights activists in Harlingen and in Reynosa. Mr. Sané will hold a press briefing on 8 October, between 8:30-9:30am at the Fort Brown Holiday Inn in Brownsville, Texas, and will also speak to the media at 5:45pm on the Hidalgo-Reynosa International bridge after he completes his tour of "Operation Rio Grande."

During his visit to the US-Mexico border, Mr. Sané will meet with INS District Director Michael Trominski in Harlingen, visit the Port Isabel Service Processing Center, and tour the border area between McAllen and Reynosa with the US Border Patrol to take a first-hand look at Operation Rio Grande. He will then hold an evening meeting with Mexican human rights activists in Reynosa. Mr. Sané chose the US-Mexico border as the first stop on his US tour because of concerns that human rights abuses by the INS had not yet been curbed, despite repeated pleas by local and international human rights organizations.

Entitled "Rights for All," the USA campaign highlights widespread human rights violations by the United States both within its borders and in its foreign policy. In a 150-page report released at the launch of the campaign, Amnesty International details a persistent pattern of human rights violations in the US by police departments, prison systems, detention facilities, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and other institutions, and pointed to the contradictions between US human rights rhetoric and its human rights practices.

"The United States must bring its laws and practices in line with international human rights standards," said Mr. Sane. "This country cannot continue to hold itself up in the world as a model of democracy, freedom and human rights, while violating the rights of its own people. Racism continues to be endemic at all levels of the US system, and state repression is becoming entrenched in all aspects of US society – from its borders, to its prisons, to its inner cities."

Within much of the report, racism and discrimination against the poor stand out as factors that determine who bears the brunt of human rights violations in the US. African Americans, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans, as well as poor Americans, are disproportionately represented in the nation's prison systems, and are also heavily targeted by the police for ill treatment, Amnesty International says.

The press briefing will be held at the Fort Brown Holiday Inn, 19 E. Elizabeth St in Brownsville (Conference Room A), on Thursday, 8 October, from 8:30-9:30am. To arrange an interview with Pierre San Sané, Secretary General of Amnesty International, or to obtain a copy of the report, please contact the above numbers. You can also visit Amnesty International's USA Campaign Web-site at:

<http://www.rightsforall-usa.org>