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AMNESTY CRITICIZES EU DOUBLE STANDARDS ON HUMAN RIGHTS: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PUBLIC HEARING

(Brussels 24 April 2003) Amnesty International has accused the European Union of continuing to exercise double standards on human rights when, as a collective body, it demands that non-EU countries address their human rights violations, while remaining silent when human rights are violated within the EU.

Addressing a public hearing in Brussels today of the European Parliament's Citizens' Rights Committee on the subject of "Respect for fundamental rights within the EU", Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office called for greater accountability at EU level for the observance of human rights in EU member states.

"The EU has neither shown the commitment nor developed the instruments to act when it comes to actual observance of human rights within its own borders - that is simply considered to be the responsibility of the member states," he told the European Parliament.

"While there is little doubt about the EU's good intentions on human rights, which are included in the Treaties and which will be anchored more firmly in the new constitutional treaty currently being drafted, unfortunately, that is where it stops. The singular lack of any kind of collective accountability creates the hypocrisy that while it is lecturing the rest of the world on how it should behave, the EU is utterly silent when human rights are violated at home," said Dick Oosting.

"EU member states must acknowledge that violations of human rights are of concern to all, and that a system of accountability has to be established at EU level. Mechanisms have to be developed to monitor and assess member states' performance as well as measures to address shortcomings, especially where they are of a structural nature," he said.

Amnesty International released two major reports in 2002 showing systematic human rights abuse against minorities and immigrants in Spain and Greece. However, the majority of EU countries appear in Amnesty International's bi-annual reports on human rights violations which show a common and disturbing pattern of abuse by law enforcement officials in EU countries, including torture, ill-treatment and excessive use of force which is regularly allowed to go unpunished.

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