

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EU OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

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**EMBARGOED UNTIL 01.00 BRUSSELS TIME WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE (FOR
WEDNESDAY MORNING MEDIA)**

**UNLAWFUL AND UNWORKABLE: (UK/Commission/UNHCR proposals on asylum
transit camps/regional protection centres)**

AMNESTY LAUNCHES 40-PAGE ANALYSIS IN LEAD-UP TO EU SUMMIT

**ALSO RELEASED: OPEN LETTER TO EU HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT ON
THE COMMON ASYLUM POLICY**

(Brussels 18 June, 2003) With this week's Thessaloniki EU summit set to discuss UK/European Commission proposals on extra-territorial processing of asylum claims, Amnesty International today launches a 40-page study of the major legal and political issues involved: ***(UK/EU/UNHCR: Unlawful and Unworkable: Amnesty International's view on proposals for extra-territorial processing of asylum claims*)***.

With the EU summit preparing to decide future priorities for the Common European Asylum System, Amnesty International also publishes an Open Letter to Europe's leaders criticizing the EU's lack of vision, their short-term thinking and their overwhelming emphasis on control and repression in regard to asylum seekers. ***(Losing Direction: The EU's Common Asylum Policy. Open Letter from Amnesty International to EU Heads of State and Government*)***.

*Both documents will be available on www.amnesty-eu.org from 01.00 on 18.6.03 - click on "documents" page. For advance copies, contact Amnesty International EU Office today - see details below.

Amnesty International's critical study of UK/Commission/UNHCR proposals for extra-territorial processing of asylum claims focuses on a number of key legal deficiencies that the organisation has identified in each, including:

- the legality of transfer
- extra-territorial responsibility
- whether extra-territorial "protection" could be effective
- concerns regarding detention
- the punitive approach to countries over readmission agreements.

The study questions whether the proposals constitute genuine and principled visions for burden and responsibility sharing and whether in fact they amount to *promotion* of "illegal" migration rather than limiting it.

The Amnesty study states:

"Perhaps most striking of all about each of the recent proposals that have been put forward is the fact that they have failed to analyse their lawfulness not only under the 1951 Refugee Convention itself, but also in relation to the range of applicable international human rights standards".

"Amnesty's analysis shows that it is now high time for EU leaders at this week's summit to make a fundamental reassessment of what they are doing in the area of asylum," said Dick

Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"Instead of a managed response to current issues surrounding the flow of asylum seekers to Europe, politicians are grabbing at ad hoc, short-term solutions which are being rushed through without sufficient regard for international refugee and human rights standards," he said.

"So far, developments in the EU's common asylum policy show a lack of strategic thinking, an absence of long-term perspective, and an overriding emphasis on keeping people out, rather than protecting the most vulnerable and helping to find safe and durable solutions for refugees. Not only is the emphasis wrong, but this defensive, control-driven approach simply isn't working," said Dick Oosting.

"We hope that this summit will produce a more mature vision for the EU's common asylum policy than what we have seen so far. Instead of exploring ways of shifting the burden away from Europe and onto poorer and more vulnerable countries, the EU must accept its responsibility as a key player in the international refugee protection regime."

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO EU SUMMIT:

Amnesty International calls on the EU Heads of State and Government to give clear and unambiguous direction to the development of protection strategies rather than allowing the preoccupation with the EU's and Member States' perceived self-interest to determine their responses to the movement of people to Europe.

Amnesty International calls on the EU Heads of State and Government to develop a coherent approach to ensure adequate protection of refugees and support for their humanitarian needs rather than exploring ways of shifting responsibility to vulnerable states.

Specifically, Amnesty International calls on the EU Heads of State and Government to refrain from any financial commitments enabling the implementation of the controversial proposals to set up transit processing centres.

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