

Media Advisory

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NICE SUMMIT: Amnesty International's continuing concern as Turkey pushes for EU membership

Amnesty International has written to the heads of government of the 15 nations attending this week's Nice summit, in order to raise concerns about the human rights situation in Turkey. EU Foreign Ministers today agreed upon a document outlining the steps Turkey should take as it works towards EU membership.

Amnesty International Secretary General, Pierre Sané, raises a number of specific concerns in the open letter, notably the practice of torture which is 'still widespread in Turkey.' He goes on to detail further areas of concern:

Torture - although Ankara has committed to a five year reform plan - a policy detailed in the so-called 'Demirok Report' - Amnesty International is demanding that measures to prevent torture must "be taken immediately rather than in 2002 or 2003."

Human rights defenders - the organization believes that human rights campaigners in Turkey are "subjected to pressure and harassment which inhibits their work."

The judicial system - Sané welcomes the recommendation in the Demirok Report that the constitution is amended to ensure that all judicial appointments are made by an independent body, but he goes on to state that the Turkish government must ensure that "all defendants are tried before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal."

Impunity - Amnesty International has documented several cases where human rights abuses perpetrated by officers of the security services have gone unpunished. At present Turkish law requires the permission of a superior official for a prosecution against a security officer to be opened.

Pierre Sané welcomes the EU's decision to monitor the human rights situation in the countries applying for membership, and the necessity for encouragement and support for Turkey's reforms.

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public document

To read the open letter sent to the EU heads of state please go to:

<http://www.web.amnesty.org/web/news.nsf/thisweek?openview>

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