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UNITED NATIONS: PROPOSED DECLARATION ON TERRORISM UNDERMINES
RIGHT TO ASYLUM

The United Kingdom government's proposed declaration on terrorism at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly is flawed in its assumptions, undermines the right to asylum and sets a dangerous precedent in seeking to reinterpret the UN Refugee Convention, Amnesty International said today.

The proposed draft makes a generalized link between refugees and acts of political violence, by seeking to refuse asylum to anyone alleged to be involved in "*planning, funding, [and] incitement of terrorist acts*".

"There is no justification for the link made in this draft. Any attempt to create one risks undermining the well-established human right to seek asylum from persecution," Amnesty International said.

The principle of *non refoulement*, which prohibits any person from being returned to a country where they face serious human rights violations, is a fundamental principle of international law. Amnesty International is extremely concerned that in seeking to address the problem of political violence, the draft undermines this principle.

"The real purpose of this declaration is to make it easier for governments to deport individuals they find politically troublesome," the organization said.

The draft is in part a result of the United Kingdom's (UK) embarrassment at the political activities of some individuals who have sought asylum in the UK and whose presence causes political problems for the government. Earlier this year, Saudi activist Mohammed al-Mas'ari was allowed to remain in the UK after a British court ruled that he could not be deported.

"If this draft is adopted, non-violent political activists could find themselves at the mercy of governments more concerned with securing lucrative trade deals and maintaining cordial diplomatic relations than upholding human rights," Amnesty International said.

In addition to the substantive issues which arise from this declaration, the organization is concerned about the way in which the United Kingdom is seeking to reinterpret the 1951 Refugee Convention.

"This is a dangerous precedent and it risks opening the door for initiatives by other states eager to have international treaties reinterpreted to suit their own domestic needs," Amnesty International said.

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