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Amnesty International: working worldwide for the release of prisoners of conscience, fair trials for political prisoners and an end to torture, extrajudicial executions, 'disappearances' and the death penalty

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FEAR MUST NOT WIN: THE EU AND HUMAN RIGHTS AFTER 11 SEPTEMBER

On the eve of the Justice and Home Affairs Council, the Secretary General of Amnesty International, Irene Khan, in Brussels for talks with EU policy-makers, issued a strong appeal for the European Union to take a global lead in efforts to protect human rights in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks.

"Fear must not win," Irene Khan said, speaking to journalists in Brussels this morning. "The security debate is in overdrive, but in the current atmosphere of global crisis, this single-minded drive for security must not be allowed to compromise basic human rights standards."

"Human rights do not need to be sacrificed to obtain security," Irene Khan said. "The EU's security measures must not undermine the very rights the EU seeks to safeguard or compromise the principles on which it was founded. The EU's obligations and its role as a global player, should take precedence over political expediency in the debate on security and asylum."

Security and Asylum

In particular, Amnesty International expresses concern that:

- Fears about "terrorists" entering the EU are encouraging a further tightening of "Fortress Europe". Policies already on the table go against the right of refugees to gain access to EU territory to seek asylum;*
- New tough anti-terrorism measures risk criminalizing refugees by association and fostering a climate of racism and xenophobia;*
- The proposed Council Framework decision on the European arrest warrant contains no express provisions on international human rights law and standards, including refugee protection;*
- The EU's asylum policies raise fundamental questions about compliance with international human rights and refugee law;*
- The proposed Council Framework decision on combating terrorism contains such broad and vague definitions that it may lead to violations of the rights of association, peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.*

"As a key global actor, the EU must take the lead in providing an unequivocal and explicit human rights perspective across its whole range of endeavors, from security measures to military action," Irene Khan said.

Open Letter to EU Leaders

Amnesty International's Secretary General issued an Open Letter to the EU Heads of State or Government with an Appeal to the Laeken Summit, asking them to reaffirm an unequivocal commitment to the right to asylum in the EU.

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