

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **EU: Flawed regulations not enough to stop trade in tools of torture**

New EU regulations are too weak to prevent the trade in equipment used for torture and executions and urgent steps are required to prevent loopholes in laws from being exploited said Amnesty International in a report released today\*.

*European Union: Stopping the Trade in the Tools of Torture*, describes how regulations introduced in 2006, fail to provide comprehensive and robust measures to ensure that companies are not able to profit by trade in this equipment.

“The European Union is the first regional body in the world to have adopted rules governing the trade in equipment used for torture and ill-treatment. However, unless the flaws in the new regulations are addressed, the torture trade is set to continue,” said Brian Wood, Amnesty International's research manager on the arms and security trade.

Weaknesses in the regulations identified by the report show how:

- Items synonymous with torture and executions including the ‘sting stick’, a baton with 3 inch spikes, and ‘hanging ropes’ used for executions in India, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago are absent from the banned list in the regulations;

- EU companies and individuals are still able to broker deals in equipment easily used for torture outside of EU territory;

- The regulations do not cover imports or trade of such equipment between EU member states in cases where there is documented evidence of state torture and ill-treatment;

- Only 11 of the 27 EU member states have drafted national laws or implemented penalties in accordance with the regulations;

- Regulations still fail to prevent the transit of torture equipment through the EU by companies from outside the EU.

“At a time when the European Union's stance against torture has been called into question by its involvement in renditions as part of the ‘war on terror’, the European Union can ill-afford to be seen to tolerate the transportation of torture equipment through its territory,” said Helen Hughes, Amnesty International's researcher on arms.

Other dubious and dangerous items are missing from the controlled list of the regulations, resulting in their being no mechanism to prevent them from being exported from EU countries despite evidence of their

systematic misuse by security services. Examples include handcuffs used to hold prisoners in stress positions during interrogations in Guantanamo Bay and electric batons used against Roma minorities by police in Slovakia and Bulgaria.

“It is crucial for EU member states to now provide a clear timetable for review of the flaws in the regulations and take steps to strengthen and fully implement these regulations if governments are to prevent the trade in tools of torture,” said Brian Wood.

**Notes to Editor**

On 31 July 2006 the European Commission brought into force the “European Trade Regulations No. 1236/2005 concerning trade in goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” this is the first set of regulations of its kind to be adopted anywhere in the world.

Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment is absolutely prohibited under European Human Rights law as is capital punishment.

\*Research for this report was also carried out by the Omega Research Foundation.

A full copy of the report: *European Union: Stopping the Trade in the Tools of Torture* will be available from 27 February 2007 on [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

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