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UN Human Rights Council: Governments' Efforts to Suppress UN Report on Secret Detention Fail

Amnesty International expressed satisfaction that the UN Human Rights Council has rejected efforts to suppress a report by UN independent experts on the worldwide use of secret detention in the name of countering terrorism.

On March 4, 2010 the Human Rights Council decided that it would consider the report at its fourteenth session in June 2010. While Amnesty International deplores the delay in the consideration of this important report, it welcomes the Council's refusal to be intimidated by states that have sought to avoid substantive discussion of secret detention in connection with counter-terrorism activities.

Amnesty International encourages all countries concerned by secret detention to fully participate in a meaningful discussion of this illegal practice when the Human Rights Council considers the report at its June 2010 session.

Background

The report on secret detention in the name of countering terrorism, prepared by four Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, highlights the global nature of the problem, naming dozens of countries, covering every region of the world, as undertaking secret detention or being complicit in it through international networks of detainee transfers and intelligence agencies.

The report was scheduled to be considered by the Human Rights Council at its thirteenth session beginning on 1 March 2010. Pakistan, writing on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and Nigeria, writing on behalf of the African Group, in respective letters of 31 December 2009 and 8 January 2010 claimed that the experts had no mandate to write the report. They asserted that the UN should not publish the report and the Human Rights Council should not consider it.

The delegation of the Russian Federation made similar assertions at an organisational meeting of the Human Rights Council held on 18 February 2010. These extreme assertions were untenable as the mandates of each of the four Special Procedures clearly cover the phenomenon of secret detention.

Amnesty International has campaigned for decades against human rights violations associated with secret detentions worldwide, including enforced disappearance, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, extrajudicial execution, and arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

The report (A/HRC/13/42*) is available on the website of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/13session/A-HRC-13-42.pdf>.

It mentions secret detention in connection with 94 countries either because they contributed to the elaboration of the report or because they were mentioned in connection with historical or contemporary recourse to secret detention.

*"Joint study on secret detention of the Special Rapporteur on torture & other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

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