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Three major human rights tests for EU Justice and Home Affairs Council

(Brussels, 12-13 June) Amnesty International hopes that tomorrow's JHA Council will not shy away from confronting a number of urgent issues that put EU human rights commitments to the test:

1. ensuring safety for irregular immigrants from Africa who try to reach Europe by sea;
2. responding adequately to the Iraqi refugee crisis;
3. adopting fair trial safeguards.

Failure to address these pressing questions adequately will strain the EU's credibility as a responsible international actor and its ambition to create an area of freedom, security and justice in Europe.

"In recent weeks, in the Mediterranean we saw people's lives being put at risk because EU member states could not agree on their responsibilities. It is imperative that the EU puts this in order and opens investigations into the recent incidents", said Dick Oosting, director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"The EU should take urgent measures to prevent further loss of life. The summer has only just begun and with it more attempts by desperate people looking for hope and protection in Europe" Oosting added.

In its letter to the German Presidency (click here to read the letter <http://www.amnesty-eu.org>) Amnesty International also reminded the EU of its obligations concerning Iraqi refugees. Despite the extreme security problems there, member states continue to diverge widely in their assessment of protection needs, creating a de facto protection lottery that is both unjust and dangerous.

Amnesty International stressed that there should be no forced returns to any part of Iraq, and reiterated its call for EU member states to show international solidarity by being more generous with resettlement.

In a separate letter (click here to read the letter <http://www.amnesty-eu.org>) Amnesty International underlined the German commitment to make the adoption of the Framework Decision on procedural rights in criminal proceedings a priority in its Presidency Programme.

"After years of prevarication, this is a crucial step for the EU to demonstrate that the purpose of EU cooperation in the field of criminal justice is not only to facilitate the prosecution of crime across borders - it is also to guarantee EU citizens strong and equal protection of their rights throughout EU territory" said Oosting.

For further comment / background and interviews:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels):
Tel: 32-2-5021499
Fax: 32-2-5025686
Email: amnesty-eu@ai.eu.be
